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THE HEBREW LITERATURE OF WISDOM IN THE LIGHT OF TO-DAY

"'These people have a secret,' we all said; 'they have discerned the way the world was going, and therefore they have prevailed.'"

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

"And Freedom rear'd in that august sunrise
Her beautiful bold brow. . . .

"There was no blood upon her maiden robes
Sunn'd by those orient skies;
But round about the circles of the globes
Of her keen eyes

"And in her raiment's hem was traced in flame
WISDOM, a name to shake
All evil dreams of power — a sacred name."

TENNYSON.

39068

THE HEBREW LITERATURE OF WISDOM

IN THE LIGHT OF TO-DAY

A Synthesis

BY

JOHN FRANKLIN GENUNG

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1906

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Published November 1906

TO

GEORGE HARRIS, D.D., LL.D.,

whose kind encouragement speeded
the preparation of my first volume
in the study of Hebrew Wisdom;
whose quick response of generous
praise was the earliest greeting elic-
ited by my second; I now, with
the added love and honor
born of closer associ-
ation, inscribe
this, my
third

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PREFACE

DO you suppose Shakespeare meant all that?" was once asked of a teacher under whose interpretative reading the pages of the Dramatist seemed to glow with new power and suggestion. Pausing for an instant's reflection, he replied, "My concern is with what Shakespeare *means*, not with what he meant." Such, in a single discriminating word, is the concern of the volume here submitted to the reader. Its aim is to unfold, in the literary idiom of to-day, what that strain of scripture utterance known to scholars as Wisdom means, for now and all time, as distinguished from, or rather as added to, what supposably it once meant.

In the sentiment that just now prevails in criticism, such inquiry after present values would seem almost to be under the necessity of apologizing for itself, lest it should run the risk of reading *into* the scripture text things not categorically there, or not consciously in the mind of the original writers. The passion for the historical, the archæological, the bald factual, has so taken

possession of the critical methods of to-day, well-nigh to the point of obsession, that hardly anything is accounted noteworthy except the fact that three hundred years before Christ a writer had a thought just so big and no bigger, or that the life and words of Christ Himself, carefully delimited from what later tradition and insight have added, should be cramped to what was seen and heard in the year 30 A. D. Just as science is walking with its head inveterately over its shoulder, searching for germs and atoms and electrons, so criticism is harking back almost exclusively to the primordial in fact and idea, as if this only were authentic, and as if all evolution after certain determinate points and periods were to be rejected as so much dubious surplusage. The evolutionary course of the brooding, restless spirit of man, as he feels his way through the experience and concepts of the ages, shaping and refining his heritage of ideas from crudity to contour and symmetry, is sadly neglected, like wayward dreams, from the sum total of the count. But ideas are the life of the race; and ideas cannot stand still; they are growing and maturing all the while. It was so in Job's and Koheleth's time; it did not cease to be so when Christ died. To say that the sages' thought is germinal is to assume that they builded

better than they knew, and that its supreme meaning is now and always a thing not of ancient history, but of the living present. On this assumption it is, the assumption that the germ connotes the far organism, that this volume is made. It assumes, what the testing fact abundantly proves, that over the individual thinking of the sages there presided always an organic teleology, which revealed itself both by positive enlargement and negative censorship, until out of common life elements it gradually evolved that manhood adultness of sagacity, that supreme philosophy of life, which St. Paul calls "the wisdom of God," and St. James "the wisdom that is from above." As such, it is an authentic strain of revelation; as truly so as if God Himself had imparted it in statutory form to Moses, or as if an inspired seer had verified it with "Thus saith the Lord."

To say this is to raise no quarrel with the prevailing criticism; with which in fact we are heartily at one both in spirit and in inductive caution. It is merely to take position at another point of its orbit, and to work out its problem from another class of data. Our quest, too, is one of historic fact, but of that higher order of fact which we term values. And as the Hebrew Wisdom is

so purely and naïvely a literature, these values are in the large sense literary values. As such they reflect the spirit of the whole man. Historic events, folk-lore, industrialism, commercialism, academic philosophy, even religion, while all on occasion contribute their quota, are none of them spacious enough to fill them out, because none of them, separately, contain more than partial values of life. Our sense of these literary values, taking a larger scope, includes whatever these sages, accredited men of letters as they were, wrought out by their creative and artistic sense, as they were concerned to bring the best that was in them and the best that is in life to vital expression. Thus in a liberal circuit which comprehends not form and style alone, but theme and aim and spiritual power, our quest for the meaning of Hebrew Wisdom resolves itself into a literary study.

On one point it takes scant note of what men have hitherto been pleased to call the literary study of the Bible, — which rather has been mainly a study of the outworks and extrinsic preliminaries of literature. Our concern is not so much with glosses, various readings, and crude first editions, as with the Bible that lies before us, its various components finished and transmitted,

by whatever vicissitudes these assumed their present shapes. We are willing to take the Book of Job as St. James read it, and as it has wrought its full influence on the later ages, with the Elihu parts and the twenty-eighth chapter in place. We do not contemn what the Gospel of John says, even though it were proved to be a Gnosticized tractate of the second century. The body of Wisdom thinking as all the generations have contributed to it, editorial additions, maturer conceptions, and all, is our sufficing monument. The tangled and dubious lines of its development have long ago met in unity and solution higher up; a solution which, on my scale of estimate, is far beyond the keen and well-nigh abnormal sense for discrepancies which at present prevails. The Bible has wrought its work through the centuries as a final and definitive edition, whose worth is not necessarily invalidated by the enlarged and refined conceptions which later interpretation has infused into it. All these latter are to be judged not on their history alone, but on their merits and their truth. They belong, in fact, for their time, to the same order of present and clarified meanings, to which the study of this latest day aims to contribute. The whole Wisdom course, we may say, is a progressive reopening

of the question, what do these utterances of life *mean?* what do they mean now?

In such light as this, as will be seen, all the prevailing clutter and clatter of glosses and readings and displacements and discrepancies fall into a very insignificant background. They need to be recognized in their essential pettiness for just what they are, but not to set the measure and spirit of our estimate, or usurp the emphasis that belongs to larger values. Charles Lamb, with his fine reverence for what men have thought and put into books, may perhaps speak a useful word here. "It seems," he says of the ancient books, "as though all the souls of all the writers, that have bequeathed their labors to these Bodleians, were reposing here, as in some dormitory, or middle state. I do not want to handle, to profane the leaves, their winding sheets. I could as soon dislodge a shade. . . . The odor of their old moth-scented coverings is fragrant as the first bloom of those sciential apples which grew amid the happy orchard. Still less have I curiosity to disturb the elder repose of MSS. Those *variæ lectiones*, so tempting to the more erudite palates, do but disturb and unsettle my faith. I am no Herculanean raker. . . . I leave these curiosities to Porson, and to G. D." This may

seem to strike a discordant note for the present-day critic, or to be but a whim of sentiment; but we do not ill to take note of the love of, and intimate communion with, the real spirit of literature which inheres with it, that sense of inner values which resolves every time-honored concept as it were into a poem. There are new discoveries yet to make for him who approaches the thinking mind of man in such reverence and sympathy.

Following with such sympathy the expanding experience of man, as we see him with analogies and antitheses and pithy maxims reducing his vision of life to form and relation, we may confidently say the venerable Hebrew Wisdom means "all that." It means indeed much more; but a single volume, ranging over six whole books of scripture and parts of several others, cannot well undertake to say much more. A treatment of such scope must confine itself to the salient things, the main and massive lines of meaning; in the endeavor so to stake these out that the wealth of detailed counsel which must needs go untouched may have a common rallying-ground and *point de repère*, so that the general readers for whom scripture truth is designed may be in position to realize its large bearings for them-

selves. Such in the main is what is endeavored in this rapid synthesis.

Readers of my other books, "The Epic of the Inner Life," and "Words of Koheleth," will at once be aware of the direct relation of this volume to them. It is in the same scripture stratum; is in fact merely an expansion and compendious placing of the same theme, carrying it on, in reduced scale, to the whole subject of which these books are components. For the extended exposition thus connoted it became evident to me, as soon as a fundamental study of these books revealed their broad import, that the way was clearly open. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes, though not in either the legal or the prophetic vein, are by no means isolated works; we cannot say of either of them, as I once heard a Biblical scholar characterize the latter named book, that it is a "boulder," dislodged somehow from the great terminal moraine of revealed truth and lying unrelated. Rather, they are accurately fitted pieces of a great spiritual mosaic, "lively stones," to adopt St. Peter's phrase, in a stately edifice of their own; of which mosaic, of which edifice, it is our present object to give the pattern and dimensions. Elsewhere (see "Words of Koheleth," pp. 147–156) I have ventured to outline this large

plan in what I have called a map of life; of which outline this volume is in great part an expansion. It will thus appear that the Hebrew Wisdom, growing as a unitary strain, an organic and as it were dramatic sequence, to rounded finish and culmination in the fulness of the time, is regarded as an integral strand of scripture revelation, coördinate with the strands of law and prophecy, yet complete in itself, in the single yet compositely twined idea for which the Bible ultimately stands.

As befits the literary approach employed by Wisdom itself, whose ways are not the severe ways of a philosophy, but the limpid ways of analogy and telling phrase and imagery, my treatment is frankly in the literary tone and feeling, with the informality and something of the discursiveness of literature, and with frequent reference to the literary parallels and illustrations with which in these modern times readers are conversant. I have been, indeed, at some pains to avoid that technical and academic tone which is sure to invade any study as soon as it becomes self-conscious and specialized. In this I have followed a conviction which, I am persuaded, is of importance for the future of Bible appreciation and realization. While, in the great movements of our

age, the scientific temper has sharpened men's sense and demand for fact, until this has almost monopolized the field, another sense, the sense for values, though equally the outcome of an age-movement, has been much slower to come to its own. Especially is this true of Biblical appreciation; which thus far has merely exchanged its old theological sense of things for the archæological. Meanwhile literary and spiritual values, borne on the tremendous educational wave, are making their way into the common consciousness in other subjects of thought, and by the universally diffused literary agencies, — fiction, poetry, criticism, popular address, — until the rank and file of men are almost forgetting that a venerable and sufficing archetype of these already exists, and in sheer ignoring of this fact are well-nigh at the point of creating a substitutionary Bible. It is time that this eternal monument of literature had its due in the idiom that is to-day vital. In this conviction it is that I have here endeavored to stamp the results of my studies with the literary coinage.

Nor can another feature of the volume, quite in line with this and with the friendly counsel of Wisdom, well be disguised: the fact that it is conceived and composed as if for an audience, and

with the freedom and immediacy of oral address. The volume originated, in fact, in a course of lectures. This course, as written out, was given on three several occasions: before the Providence Biblical Institute in 1904; before an audience of Amherst neighbors in 1905; and before the Twentieth Century Club, Boston, in 1906. To these more formal courses may be added the traversing of the ground with a Bible-study class in the Old South Church, Boston, during the winter of 1904–05. In each successive presentation the lectures were revised and somewhat extended, beginning with six and ending with eight, as the repeated survey of the subject seemed to demand.

In a treatment so broadly compendious as this there is little if any occasion to insist on an amended translation or a corrected text of Bible passages. The King James Version, which has had most to do with shaping men's realization of scripture truth, is for the most part accurate enough to support the large literary estimate. In the citations from Job and Ecclesiastes, however, I have availed myself of my own translation, made for my treatises on those books; and for the Apocryphal Wisdom I have used the Revised Version. The citations from Proverbs do not follow

any one version consistently; the wording that best preserved the spirit and interrelations of Wisdom seemed in each case the one to use.

A feeling that comes over every sincere student of Bible truth in these times may here be left on record; one that inspires far more than it disheartens. It is the feeling that any books we write, however fundamentally studied, are after all merely books *pour servir;* answering a temporary purpose, while all the while, and by means of the very contributions they make, a more majestic vision of things is coming progressively into view, which will soon make these little endeavors either obsolete or obvious matters of course. Both these results are a sequel not to be deprecated but devoutly to be wished. For new light is breaking forth, with almost startling rapidity, from scripture; new windows of heaven opening for every new window of earth; this is true in our own time in a sense beyond what the world has known for centuries. If in however lowly degree the present volume may contribute some little ray to this increasing light, even though as soon as it is born it begins to die into the larger radiance that is surely dawning, the most fervent hope of the author will be realized. For he can conceive of no nobler occupation of the scholar

than that which, as it inspired the ancient sages about whom he has written, has still the same power to draw men to the heights of eternal truth and vision; while, noting how the wise of old have grown in sureness of insight and prophecy, these, too, strive, according to their ripened wisdom, to "copy fair what time hath blur'd."

JOHN FRANKLIN GENUNG.

AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS,
September 2, 1906.

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I

THE WISDOM FIELD, AND THE SAGES

TO PENETRATE THE DISGUISE OF TIME

I. The sages in the Hebrew nation.
II. Status of their books in the Hebrew canon.
III. Their Wisdom compared with current philosophy.
IV. Its literary dynamic.
V. How the order of sages rose and prospered.

THE HEBREW LITERATURE OF WISDOM

I

THE WISDOM FIELD, AND THE SAGES

TO three books of the Old Testament canon and two of the Apocrypha has been given the collective name of the Wisdom books, or the Wisdom literature. These are: the Book of Proverbs, the Book of Job, the Book of Ecclesiastes, and in the Apocrypha the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, otherwise called Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon. Some add to this list the Song of Solomon; this, however, not because the book is in the Wisdom strain, but because, having confessedly no other disposal to make of it, they class it with the other writings associated with King Solomon's name. This reason is obviously too slender for us to respect, if we would reduce our group of books to the unity and relation connoted by the common name Wisdom. We may properly disregard the Song of Solomon, therefore, as not belonging to our subject.

From a review of these five books, then, together with such other parts of the Old and New Testaments as are in the same specific vein, our endeavor shall be to get a view of Hebrew Wisdom in its large literary and spiritual values; so identifying it the while with what is vital in our modern thinking and literature as to realize its perennial appeal to the living heart of man. The distinctive name that they have earned is our warrant for assuming that these books have a unitary and organic character of their own. They have proved their power historically by millenniums of undiminished life; our business now is to judge, by the data which prevail in the world of to-day, whether this ought to be so.

Our review, while taking constant note of how this Wisdom got itself into literary form, is concerned with this only as a means to an end. The end is the steadily enlarging and developing idea, and what it leads to. The treatment shall be not so much historical as expository; or rather, if it may sometimes seem to pay too scant respect to that all-prevailing historic method which a recent writer has called "the death of clear exposition," it may yet aspire to trace that deeper history, or evolution, which belongs to the tides of the spirit. We are concerned, in fact, with an important

chapter in the history of personality, of the growth of strong and rounded manhood. One essential strain of that developing personality is the intellectual and educative; the awakening of the mind to life as it is, and the working of ideals clear from the fogs and evils that beset them. This, as expressed in the idiom of the Hebrew mind and character, is the meaning of the inquiry before us.

I

These Wisdom books are representative writings of a class of men of whom otherwise little is known; less, perhaps, than is known of any other class of writers or leaders. Whether, like scribes and rabbis, the Wise Men or Sages constituted a distinct order, recognized and honored as such; whether a kind of official authority was accorded to them in the make-up of the national life; whether they formed a quasi-university fellowship, wherein they passed examinations and took degrees; whether their profession of Wisdom was also a livelihood, in which like a modern lawyer they gave counsel and took fees, — are matters concerning which we can do no more than infer or conjecture. But that they had a distinctive standing in the nation, that in their sphere they were an acknowledged influence in society, seems indi-

cated in the clearest reference that we have to them, a verse in Jeremiah. "Then said they," — namely, certain perverse people whom the prophet's words had irritated, — "Come, and let us devise devices against Jeremiah; for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet." Here the wise are mentioned as a kind of order, co-ordinate with that of priests and prophets, and having their function reckoned as in its way authoritative by the side of the priests' law and the prophets' burden. They were, it appears, counsellors, advisers, men to whom the people resorted for a kind of guidance not provided for in the Mosaic ordinances which the priests had in charge, nor in the impassioned appeals addressed to the nation at large by the prophets. A third order of leadership was in fact needed.

The field for this order of sages to cultivate was such as lies at the heart of common humanity everywhere. There is the sphere of living in which not the nation is primarily concerned, but the individual; not the church, but the home: the sphere of industry and business, of prosperity and success, of social behavior and social honor, of tactful speech and prudent dealing. A most momentous sphere this; the sphere in which through the

wisely educated individual a nation's character is made sound and sterling from within. It was to this personal unit, this primal nucleus of the corporate life, that the sages addressed themselves; as one of their maxims expresses it: —

> "If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself,
> And if thou art a scoffer, thou alone must bear it."

It is interesting to come across a class of men who are engaged in this subsoiling educative work, content for that to bury themselves in parish and neighborhood affairs; and who are honored for their work's sake, rather than for the fame they get or the office they hold.

These sages, it would seem, at least to begin with, gave their counsel mostly by word of mouth, and not from some central bureau or university, but here and there among the people, where they were in close touch with practical life. When they wrote, they wrote anonymously, or else hid their individuality under the name and prestige of King Solomon. Their writings were not chanted in the Temple, nor read officially in the synagogues. Homely maxims as these were, a humbler but more potent and pervasive mission was theirs: to circulate among those common work-day folk whose thoughts centre in concrete tasks and trials,

and to whom, as men who want their literary pabulum pithy and to the point, we may apply George Herbert's words: —

> "A verse may find him who a Sermon flies,
> And turn delight into a Sacrifice."

The literature of Wisdom, whether oral or written, was a literature immediate, practical, portable.

In brief, the Hebrew sages, however penetrative their counsel actually was, did not aim to be the academic philosophers of the few, but the neighborly counsellors of the many. Their utterances, more nearly than any others in Scripture, approach the popular vein; and this because they deal with the kind of thought most accessible to the average man. They are the common man's *vade mecum* of life. What Cardinal Newman ascribes to his ideal great author may in one trait be applied to the ideal sage of the olden Hebrew times: "He expresses what all feel, but all cannot say; and his sayings pass into proverbs among his people, and his phrases become household words and idioms of their daily speech, which is tessellated with the rich fragments of his language, as we see in foreign lands the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the walls and pavements of modern palaces."

Do not deem that I am trying to draw a fanciful picture of this class of counsellors and maxim-makers. I am merely looking for substantial facts. We have doubtless only a fragment of their work, relatively, to judge them by; but of those three canonical books which now represent them, the Book of Proverbs stands immeasurably above any other collection of aphorisms; the Book of Job is justly reckoned one of the supreme literary creations of the ages; and the Book of Ecclesiastes, with its gloom and its cheer, is a book whose power even to-day to amaze and fascinate exceeds that of the most vaunted modern authors. A strain of literature which can make such a proportional showing in the world's inventory of authorship must have some corresponding function in that large "business of life" which, as Stevenson maintains, "is mainly carried on by means of this difficult art of literature."

Here lies, in fact, the kernel of our present inquiry. A strain of literature, we say; yet we refer it to an order of men who were concerned with "wise saws and modern instances," with maxims coined for the hour and the emergency. Why then a strain, and how? In other words, we want to see if *as* a strain, as a unitary body of utterance, Hebrew Wisdom has some large organic

idea whose development we can trace. We want to find, if we may, what, as a class in Hebrew life and thought, the order of sages stood for. They were doing a much needed work, down there at the roots of society; and our natural inquiry is, whether this was done sporadically, single-handedly, dispersedly, as the individual whim or impulse seized each man; or whether, as the periods of their activity advanced, they struck into common ground, and, going forward side by side like explorers, kept track of the way already traversed and the common direction, and signalled to each other as they marched through the tangled woods of experience toward the open beyond. Is there a unity of spirit, a characterizing *esprit de corps*, traceable through their utterances, and perhaps growing in concentration and system, from that squad of wise men, Ethan and Heman and Chalcol and Darda, who surrounded King Solomon, and with whom he himself worked, down to the latest writer, almost contemporary with Christ, who still named Solomon as his literary sponsor? This question reveals the true import of our present study; and the answer to it is what makes our subject a subject indeed, a synthesis, and not a mere pretext for assembling historical information.

II

The sages' department of the Bible itself merits a few words in our effort to place them.

The arrangement of books in the Hebrew Bible does not exactly correspond to the arrangement familiar to us in our Authorized Version; wherein, after the historical books, come first the so-called poetical books, and then the prophets great and minor, ending with Malachi. The Hebrew arrangement, on the other hand, reflects, in the large, the sense that the Jewish scholars had, as they made up their canon, of the relative religious values of the successive groups of books. Our Lord names the threefold cleavage of the Hebrew Bible, as it was generally recognized in his time, in his remark about "all things . . . which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms [so named from the first book of the third division] concerning me;" and Jesus Sirach similarly mentions "the law, and the prophets, and the other books of our fathers."[1] These three departments of the Bible had on the Jewish religious and doctrinal estimate much the effect of three refluent surges, or waves, of spiritual authority. But with this sense was interwoven,

[1] Luke xxiv, 44; Ecclus. Prologue.

dimly but on the whole accurately, a sense of the progress of the human spirit, as by successive stages, from the law of the nation or species to the law of the individual. Professor Shaler, in his scientific study of this steady advance of man, remarks: "It is hardly too much to say that on this individualizing process depends all the real work that is done within the universe."[1] This same individualizing process it is that is reflected, in its sphere, in the make-up of the Hebrew canon; as we shall see by a glance at its three strata.

Most valued of all, as the original source of the national character and worship, was, as it still is, the Mosaic law with its accompanying history, or, as the Jews called it, the Torah; which word Professor Siegfried defines, according to his too narrow and rudimental view, decision by oracle, referring, perhaps, to the high-priestly methods of divination; a definition too rudimental, I say, because the Torah idea was immensely larger than this, taking in, as it came to do, all the directions of life which were recognized as coming from God, whether through oracle or through teachers and lawgivers.[2] It was this Torah, or law, which

[1] Shaler, *The Individual*, p. 15.

[2] Siegfried, in Hastings, Bible Dictionary, art. *Wisdom*. See by way of correction, Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise*, pp. 139 sqq.

figured supremely in the ceremonies of the Temple, in the interpretative work of the scribes, and in the scrupulous piety of the Pharisees; a kind of colossal police regulation and religious code for the Hebrew race. Next to this in esteem came the body of fervid prophecy, again with its accompanying history; which, though its immediate occasion in national affairs passed, was still read in the synagogues, and cherished as a kind of spiritual dynamic, fitly offsetting the too mechanical tendencies of law. The third division, which from its opening book our Lord referred to as the Psalms, is the one in which all our Wisdom books are contained. Its Hebrew name, K'thubim, "writings," indicates that this third collection of books was regarded as a miscellany of things unclassifiable, or left over after the other collections were made. And this is just what it was. It was supposed to occupy a lower religious, or at least ritual and dogmatic plane; its authority was less binding than that of the two main collections; being made up so much later as still to have retained something of the doubtfulness attaching to books of the day. It contained some books, notably Ecclesiastes and Esther, whose right to a place in the sacred canon was seriously questioned for many years. Both of these last named books, however,

and three others, the five called collectively the Rolls, were so popularly esteemed as to be selected for reading in the synagogues on feast days: the Song of Songs at the Passover, Ruth at Pentecost, Lamentations on the anniversary of the Fall of Jerusalem, Ecclesiastes at the Feast of Tabernacles, and Esther at the Feast of Purim. Outside of these five little rolls, and the Book of Psalms, which latter, being the Hebrew anthem-book, would of course be in constant public service, the books of this third scripture division, Job and Proverbs with the rest, were not put to any public or ceremonial use, but survived as they were read and valued privately.

All this indicates, however, not that the sages' work, the Wisdom literature, was little accounted of, or less familiarly known. It simply means that the estimate attached to it was of another and perhaps even more intimate kind. Wisdom was the one department of canonical literature, among the Hebrews, which did not insist on its divine origin and function. The law was referred directly back to the God of Sinai. It prefaced all its enactments with, "And the Lord spake unto Moses;" or else, if a special need required special direction, the priest was supposed to get a divine oracle from the Urim and Thummim of his breastplate.

The word of prophecy made a similar claim to the dictation of heaven: "Thus saith the Lord." But here was a kind of utterance that did not set up the claim to anything more authoritative than good sense and sound reason. It was the pronouncement of sagacious men on the world of secular activities as they saw it; the principles of management and character that the sanest thinking had come to recognize. To such literature as this, men, and especially laymen, could come for its intrinsic interest and value; not because obligation was laid upon them, but because they were inwardly drawn to it; could come without first getting their minds into a sanctuary attitude, and feeling that faith or infidelity, orthodoxy or heresy, were involved in their reception of it. Entering thus with unmortgaged judgment and free-moving spirit into the thoughts of the proverb writers and Job and Ecclesiastes, they could think for themselves, and accept or question as their reason dictated. Their attitude toward these books, I imagine, was something like Adam Bede's toward the non-canonical Wisdom book, Ecclesiasticus. He would read the canonical books with a very solemn look, feeling the absoluteness of their inspired truth; but "when he read in the Apocrypha, of which he was very fond, the son of

Sirach's keen-edged words would bring a delighted smile, though he also enjoyed the freedom of occasionally differing from an Apocryphal writer. For Adam knew the Articles quite well, as became a good churchman." [1]

In a word, the Wisdom literature is, relatively, the secular department of the Bible; made at a time, it is true, when the lines of sacred and secular were not sharply or even consciously drawn, and by a people whose whole life had a felt background of the sacred; but dealing with affairs of this world and its work, and calling on the practical self-reliant activities of men. In it we hear the accents of a human voice, giving counsel for the work of human hands and brains, making sound reason prevail in human enterprises alike secular and religious. Rightly considered, it contributes to the strength and beauty of both the practical and the worshipful to read with the primary feeling, not "Thus saith the Lord," but "Thus saith a strong, wise, much-observing, much-experienced, much-sympathizing man." And perhaps in the long run this feeling may help us appreciate the Lord's word itself better; nay, who knows but the man's first-hand insight and the Lord's revelation may come to coalesce and be

[1] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, chap. li.

identical, the man's reason being lifted to the higher plane where he can see divine things as they are, and even on such matters speak with real authority? This, in very truth, is the great discovery that we shall make in our study of scripture Wisdom.

III

In any nation's literature, as soon as we penetrate below questions of form and artistic wording, we come upon the distinctions that really count, the qualities that are potent to determine the various classes of appreciators. Each reader finds his own; each mind selects its peculiar nourishing food. There is the literature of action and adventure; the literature of grace and poetic sentiment; the literature of large and lofty patriotism or impassioned eloquence; the literature of severe and close-woven science: each having its own idiom and approach to things. These books of Hebrew Wisdom embody, for their age and race, what in our nomenclature would be called philosophy. I say this, it will be noted, guardedly; because many modern scholars, after conceding this general classification, hasten to assure us that, if philosophy at all, it is philosophy with a radical difference. Nay, some assert that its very nature

excludes from it everything really philosophical.[1] They do not clearly see, it would seem, how to range it with Plato and Aristotle and Kant and Schopenhauer; and when they erect a Hall of Fame and call it a history of philosophy, the Hebrew sages are conspicuous by their absence. The Hebrew mind, they say, was not speculative, not philosophical; and for the Hebrews' explanation of the causes and hidden principles of things they have much the same contempt, a contempt in which the whole Bible shares, that Dr. Johnson had for a woman's preaching. "Sir," he once said, "a woman's preaching is like a dog's walking on his hinder legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all."

Well, to be sure, we must grant every nation its distinctive genius. It is more natural, as St. Paul says, for the Jew to require a sign, to color his thoughts with palpable evidences and sanctions, than like the Greek, with a kind of dead-lift of speculative and logical insight, to seek after wisdom. But we can easily get too narrow an idea of

[1] On the ground indicated by Siegfried, Hastings, Bible Dictionary, footnote to art. *Wisdom:* "Philosophy proper had no existence, and could have none, among the Hebrews. A process of thought free from presuppositions was unknown to them. God and Divine revelation were accepted as fixed points. Accordingly, all that was aimed at was merely to penetrate deeper into the contents of what was given and to define it more precisely."

what this requiring a sign means. It does not necessarily mean requiring miracles; all that makes it include this is the fact that the Hebrew referred everything ultimately to a supernatural source, so that every sign that his inquiry was on the right track came presumably from God. It might be traceable to a seen cause, or ratified in natural effects; but the Hebrew waited for the sign that its causes or effects were real, instead of striking out into the abyss of *a priori* reasoning. And the Wisdom — assume it for the moment to be a philosophy — which the Hebrew *did* achieve took a character of its own from this racial trait. Instead of soaring off in clouds of metaphysics, as if the principles of things were still nebulous and chaotic, waiting for the thinker who could shape them, it clings close to concrete life, to the things that every healthy brain can see and judge, and that every unscholared man can interpret to practical purpose. Of course we can see how very unphilosophical a procedure this is. Instead of using up all its motive power in getting its machinery started, — absorbing itself, in other words, in seeking origins and building cosmogonies and speculating on causes, — it takes some things frankly for granted, — God, for instance, and his understood will, and his ordered care of the world;

or, as St. Paul expresses it, that "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." [1] The Hebrew Wisdom never treated this as an open question at all; it went on from this to mass its energies on character and conduct. In a deep sense this character and conduct, this capacity of the human for Godlikeness, were the sign that the presupposition is so. An inquiry that thus produces an actual fruitage in manhood work looks practical enough; but we can see what a sad handicap this result is to its being counted in the imposing rank of the world's philosophies. It acts too much as if some things in the universe might be regarded as already plain to a sound mind, and as therefore usable for practical ends.

This, I suspect, is really the estranging feature which has hitherto kept men from attributing to the Hebrew sage, in the sense which they accord to Plato and Hegel, the constructing of a veritable philosophy of life. The life itself bulks so much larger than the getting it into terms, and withal everything is so plain and workable, that we miss that metaphysical haze which the name philosophy is so apt to connote, and which I have described

[1] Romans i, 20.

as belonging to the preliminary process of getting the speculative machinery in working order. Things are sometimes best illustrated, as Cardinal Newman used to say, by caricature. I would not be understood, therefore, as poking satire at modern philosophical methods, but merely as giving sharper point to a distinction, if I here elucidate the idea I am defining by Carlyle's humorous description of Coleridge's marvellous philosophizing aptitude: "He began anywhere: you put some question to him, made some suggestive observation: instead of answering this, or decidedly setting out towards answer of it, he would accumulate formidable apparatus, logical swim-bladders, transcendental life-preservers, and other precautionary and vehiculatory gear, for setting out; perhaps did at last get under way, — but was swiftly solicited, turned aside by the glance of some radiant new game on this hand or that, into new courses; and ever into new; and before long into all the Universe, where it was uncertain what game you would catch, or whether any." [1] This accumulation of philosophical apparatus, to Carlyle's forthright mind, was intolerable. It seemed to be going through such elaborate motions of progress, and yet, as the slang phrase is, with

[1] Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, Part I, chap. viii.

"nothing doing," no appreciable output of result; —or as Carlyle words it, "*what* you were to believe or do, on any earthly or heavenly thing, obstinately refusing to appear from it."

Now my philosopher colleague has told me that this is all you can rightly expect of a philosophy, from the nature of the case: that its primary business is merely to erect the plant, so to say, and furnish it with the newest and most efficient machinery, and leave the actual work of life-building to others. He maintains also, and in this he is not alone, that the Hebrews were not truly in the philosophical category, because, being founded not on speculation but on a religious and supposedly revealed tradition, they had a plant and method already prescribed, and so were estopped from philosophizing their way through life. Well, be it so now; though I do not unqualifiedly accept it. To attempt answer here would carry us too far afield; because it would set us inquiring what process the human mind goes through in acquiring a revelation, and whether, after all, native insight and reason were not so concerned in it, whenever it came, as to have made the primal truth, which looked so objectively miraculous, a truth apprehended in an authentic sense philosophically. Most of our disputes, you know, turn ultimately

on the meaning of words; and we are much in need here of a description, in the light of to-day's idiom, of what actually took place in the Hebrew's mind when he received what he called a revelation. Maybe it was identical with what our less emotional nature calls a thought or conviction, only expressed, according to his race and temperament, in more glowing and objective terms, or, if you please, more intuitively, and with less impedimenta of apparatus. At any rate, let us not, as many do, fall so absolutely into the attitude of Hosea Biglow's politician, —

"But John P.
Robinson he
Sez they did n't know everythin' down in Judee," —

as lightly to conclude they did n't know *any*thing down in Judee. The Hebrew mind, with its centuries of musing on things seen and unseen, really meditated to some purpose.

The plain truth of the matter, after all, seems not hard to get at. The difference between him and us is, that he takes his philosophy the other way round, beginning where we leave off. Ours, like our planet, is a condensation — we may perhaps say also a cooling — from nebula to orbic form; it comes, as the nursery poem phrases it, "out of the everywhere into the here," gathering

the scattered elements into slow, patient system; and the last term of its series, arrived at by much head-breaking contemplation, and still somewhat in abeyance, is God. With the Hebrew, God is the first term, the unquestioned postulate; and in the encompassing sense of his being and will the Hebrew thinker went forth into the welter of the world, or rather into the turmoil of human life and personality, to re-create manhood in God's image. Thus his effort was not to condense the clouds of speculation into a ball, but rather to pierce them through and through with light from beyond.[1]

Meanwhile, it satisfies our present purpose to note that the Hebrew sage was working in the other section of the world orbit; in the practical rather than the speculative, in an applied system rather than a theorized. His procedure, in fact, was more like our modern inductive science than like philosophy; his obstinate requiring of a sign to authenticate his progress was essentially the same as our reliance on observation and experiment to make sure we are right as far as we go. His distinctive strain is not unfitly indicated in the very name he so confidently gave to his system: it is Wisdom, the real article, the idea actually at

[1] Davidson, *Biblical and Literary Essays*, pp. 29 sqq.

work, rather than Philosophy, the love of wisdom, the search after a thing yet problematic and inchoate.

But that it has, therefore, not a real philosophic tissue and basis? Well, that remains to be seen. There is one thing, at the outset, to put to the credit side of the account; and let it stand for what it is worth. It is what I have already mentioned as distinguishing the Wisdom section of the Bible from the rest. The sages do not *assume* to get their views of life from a mount of revealed vision, nor demand that men accept their word because the Lord has said it. They go out with the eyes and ears and common sense with which every man is endowed, and they ask men to heed their word because it is self-evidencing and reasonable. For the rest, the fact that they come to identify their verdict with what others deem revelation is not necessarily against either its validity or its philosophic soundness. It simply reaches the same conclusion by another process, at once more intuitive and more experimental.[1] It deals predominantly with the spiritual elements of human nature, as philosophy does with the intellectual; with the truths that never can be proved, that

[1] How true this is may be seen by comparing the course and outcome of President Hyde's book, *From Epicurus to Christ.*

need not be proved, because they are there in plain sight, and they themselves prove. These elemental principles do not *look* so scholarly, and thus do not afford so good opportunity for those who exploit them to achieve a cheap reputation for abysmal learning. Hence, they may be deceiving as to depth. But if we take adequate heed of them, we may find that human reason and religious faith are coördinate means, each equally valid in its sphere, of getting at the truth of things; may find also that the truth after which both are searching is at bottom one and indivisible.

The inquiry how far *we* also may put faith in the sages' verdict on life is in truth best answered not in the time-worn philosophic dialect, but in a more modern approach. Everything is nowadays studied historically, genetically. The Hebrew Wisdom too, we find, was a thing with a history: it was a consecutive growth, an evolution. It began rudimentally, with the salient facts and values of life, the things that every mind can apprehend and every calloused hand work with. It entered the field of common human affairs: noting the lines of industry and intercourse, the groundwork of habits and tendencies, customs and manners and speech, the ever-invading perversity of the undisciplined heart, the inexorable marriage

of act and consequence. It gradually evolved a great central law of wise conduct, with its sanctions of reward and penalty; which law had then, as time went on, to meet successive onsets of testing, verification, broadening, deepening, until its validity was thoroughly established. The idea that there *was* such a law and manhood order it had taken for granted in the first place; Moses had begun the ingraining of that. But this it had exploited on its own account and in its own idiom; and from a ceremonial and national law had expanded it gradually to a universally human and even cosmic reference; so that before we leave the contemplation of the seasoned body of Wisdom, there looms up behind it the background of a world, a universe, a solemn and unitary abyss of being. All this looks to me like the evolution not of a minutely reasoned, but of a deeply lived and realized philosophy. It is, in sum, a vital chapter in the large evolution of personality.

Now this, so far as it goes, is a philosophy of just that kind which our modern scientific mind is even now engaged in building; somewhat timidly, indeed, and cautiously terming it metaphysical evolution; but surely sweeping into it as by a fate. It is a philosophy founded not on *a priori* assumptions, but on fact and a reign of law; working in the

sphere of the higher biology, and sturdily treading in its eternal principles at every step of advance. Crude and fragmentary this Wisdom chapter is, to be sure, and needing translation into terms and concepts of to-day. I would not claim too much for it. But from the light in which I have come to view it, I deem that we have rather been inclined to claim too little. The Jews indeed require a sign; they demand some authentic speaking fact from the mystery that encompasses us. But so, for that matter, does science; and the supreme sign which the Hebrew Wisdom was set to discover was, like that which gleams before our evolutionary thinkers, the unending miracle of manhood being.

IV

But we have only half done with the description of Hebrew Wisdom when we have made it out to be a veritable philosophy. The half that is above ground, if I may so express it, is yet to be noted. To that solid core of philosophic thinking and judicial poise Wisdom adds the dynamic of literary power. It survives to us, as it found way to its first lay readers, not only on account of its substance, but by the verve and vitality of its form. This quality it doubtless is, in great part, which has dazzled pedantic eyes, like Professor Siegfried's,

into denying its essential philosophic strain.[1] "Nor is the form of the *Hokhma*," he says, "that of the school speech; it is popular." This is the academic way of saying it is literary. A literature, and in the literary key, the appeal of Wisdom is to man as man, not to man as learned and technical, or to man as merely embodied intellect and reason. It gets at man's thought by way of his life and will; in other words, its idiom is that of the spirit. Literature I define broadly as that fulness of utterance wherein the whole man comes to expression; as the central spirit of man translated into word and image. Some, and especially book-dried scholars, are suspicious of this sort of thing. They say that when you become emotional it warps your view of things, or when you give play to your imagination you emasculate your thought, cannot numerate it 1, 2, and 3, small a and b. They want every utterance cold, literal, logical, dispassionate; they would put their literature into the category somewhere described in scripture as "things without life giving sound." Not so this Wisdom; not so at all. It tingles in every part with the sense of life; life intense in expression according to the issue with which it deals. Heart and head are alike

[1] See footnote, p. 18 above. The sentence here quoted follows immediately on what is given there.

enlisted; intellect and emotion, imagination and impulse, are quickened and nourished; as the man is fired with the splendor or momentousness of his cause, so he speaks. So his word rises on fit occasion to heights of passion or invective; it burgeons into visions of beauty and sublimity; it melts into moving accents of sympathy and tenderness. If a Job is stung by the apparent injustice of his hearsay God, his words flow in a molten stream of indignant remonstrance. If an Ecclesiastes feels the cramping effect of this vain prison-house existence, the sombre tone and coloring of his speech is the frank portrayal of it. If the Proverb writer is enraptured by the beauty and majesty of Our Lady Wisdom, or charmed by the sweet domestic grace and good sense of the Virtuous Woman, there is a rhythm and richness of style to correspond. It pictures, not argues; it is too passionate to be stiff and precise. Popular? nay, this is too light a word; the utterance of Wisdom takes its peculiar literary texture from being the utterance of the whole man.

All this is little suggestive of what our imagination calls up when the name philosophy is pronounced. We think of philosophy as something severe and academic: as profound learning, head-breaking thought, the secretion of pure brain. To

read it we must literally work our passage; and if our lives are kindled by it, we have to supply the fire, meeting the philosopher more than halfway. Its appeal is only to a part of us, only to the intellect; and all the literary fervors and beauties that set us in a glow of delight or quicken our emotional and active nature are so much surplusage, which to the cold heart of the pedant amounts to so much defect. This fact is to be reckoned with for what it is worth in holding up Wisdom by the side of philosophy. Wisdom, being first of all a literature, has the universal appeal of literature. It exists for men who feel and act as well as for men who study and contemplate. If philosophy, it is philosophy inwoven with the palpitating issues of life. It is not academic, a luxury for scholars; not esoteric, a thing for favored initiates to gloat over; not concerned to look or sound scholarly, or to guard its secret profundities. Rather, it aims to be an all men's utterance, which every lowliest one hearing may understand. Let us not think, then, that this literary quality gives us less or less conclusive truth. Rather it gives us as much more as the whole man is more than a part, and as mankind is more than a favored class. To every man in whom the spirit of manhood dwells, it opens his native rights in life.

V

It is time now to inquire a little more closely how this strain of literature took its rise in the Hebrew nation, and what initial stamp the sages gave to it. A literature so eminently a folk's literature, is it not natural to look for its source and spring somewhere in the folk's heart and life?

Well, as we note the rather fragmentary scraps of utterance embedded in the early Hebrew history, we come, away back in the record of the Judges, upon a very interesting illustration of how the common folk — by which term I mean the people separated for the moment from the care of seers and priests — used to amuse themselves in a quasi-literary way. For the light it throws on racial bent and characteristics, it is to my mind a discovery almost as notable as Bishop Percy's discovery of the ballad poetry of the English unlettered classes. Every nation according to its native genius. In the present case — I am referring to Samson's riddle — we come upon a folk's bent, not as among the English, for fighting and the chase and romantic love, not as among Oriental nations, for genies and treasure-trove and magical exploits; but for an untying of intellectual and verbal knots, for an exercise of wits. The young

athlete Samson, it appears, on his way to woo a woman of the Philistines, had killed a young lion that roared against him; and some time later, on his way to the wedding, had found a swarm of bees and honey in the lion's carcass. So when the diversions of the wedding feast were in progress, Samson gave his riddle to the Philistines to guess.

> "Out of the eater came forth meat;
> And out of the strong came forth sweetness." [1]

This does very well for a muscular giant's first incursion into literary expression; but it can hardly be called a fair riddle, because to guess it one must know not a common principle, but an exceptional event, a freak fact. No wonder that, as Samson expressed it, the answer, by the device of "ploughing with his heifer," had to come eventually from the propounder himself. Too evidently Samson was no sage; and his famous riddle did not embody any wisdom at all, but only a puzzle which one man alone had the combination for unlocking.

Far wiser, in fact, and containing a really exquisite moral lesson, was Jotham's earlier parable, or apologue, of the fruit trees and the bramble.[2] Even this latter example, however, I do not adduce as a pioneer specimen of what we understand by Wisdom literature. What I would

[1] Judges xiv, 14. [2] Judges ix, 8–15.

have you note is, that in the form of Samson's riddle, with its epigrammatic thought-provoking phrase, and still more truly in Jotham's parable, with its easy employment of analogy and similitude, we have disclosed to us, through these casual folk utterances of early history, the characteristic mould, the phrasal matrix, in which the pronouncements of Wisdom were cast. We shall see what the sages made of it later. Here at the outset it is of interest to note that it is a form not exotic nor artificial, but one that rises spontaneously out of the native genius, the thought attitude, of the common people. When some local event caused an unknown person, like a ballad-maker, to drop into literature, authors of that class were referred to as "they that speak in proverbs."[1]

Two or three other examples, occurring in the reign of King David, seem to put us in touch with Wisdom utterance in the early making. The first wise man mentioned in the Bible — if you will pardon the Hibernicism — was a woman. She was brought by Joab from Tekoah, to tell and enact Joab's parable to the king, and so elicit from him a judgment which would enable him, with a good face, to restore Absalom to favor.[2] Another wise woman, encountering Joab in his siege of Abel,

[1] Numbers xxi, 27. [2] 2 Samuel xiv, 2–20.

saved the city by her wisdom, much as the poor wise man did in Ecclesiastes' story.[1] King David, it would seem, though not an originator of wisdom like his brilliant son, had a heart tenderly open to the wisdom of others; for besides his reception of the wise woman's parable, just mentioned, you remember how nobly he responded to the searching parable of Nathan the prophet.[2] And both these cases show a shrewd device of the early folk's wisdom: the device of constructing a parallel case, or analogy, and getting the hearer to make the application himself. The spice of latent humor in it reminds us oddly of the sly remark of one of Dickens's characters, "The bearin's of this observation lies in the application on 't." As a serious proposition, it was something like what we call parity of reasoning, except that it took the seductive form of story rather than the framework of logic. It was a form of counsel, or reproof, that could not be gainsaid.[3]

[1] 2 Samuel xx, 16–22; Eccl. ix, 14–16. [2] 2 Samuel xii, 1–14.

[3] The following examples of scattered sayings outside of the Wisdom books bear the mark of folk proverbs, racy rather than artistic. Judges viii, 21: "As the man is, so is his strength;" 1 Samuel xxiv, 13: "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked;" Jeremiah xxxi, 29, Ezekiel xviii, 2: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;" Ezekiel xii, 22: "The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth;" amended in the next verse to, "The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision;" Ezekiel xvi, 44: "As is the mother, so is her daughter."

The literary form and vehicle of Wisdom, however, must be left to a chapter by itself. For its distinctive grounding, we do well, I think, to heed the tradition which traces the Wisdom literature, as an organized species of authorship, to the time and atmosphere of King Solomon. Tradition has done much to disguise Solomon in a haze of magic and glamour. The name Solomon, too, became a convenience as a literary label for a distinctive strain of authorship; just as the name of Moses was used to designate the body of Hebrew legislation, from early to late, and as the name of David gave distinction to the body of Hebrew psalmody. But where there is so much smoke, it would seem, there must be some fire. Apart from this conventionalism and glamour, apart also from the mere tradition of his cleverness, there must have been a self-justifying reason for naming a body of literature after Solomon rather than after, say, Professor Cheyne's pet, Jerahmeel.

And I think the reason is not hard to deduce from historic conditions. Not that King Solomon must needs have functioned as a royal sage; or at least as the spectacular sage, with his patriarchal air of vast experience, or his oracular mien of "wisdom, gravity, profound conceit." If he did, it was more theatrical than real; for his reign

had too much of short-sighted administration, Oriental self-indulgence, not to say of sheer heathen folly, to be a sage's reign. But his court seems to have been pervaded by an atmosphere in which the newly awakened thoughts of men throve and blossomed; and he himself was so responsive to the influence, so alert to explore new regions of knowledge and annex larger areas of thought, that his enthusiastic historian says God gave him "wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."[1] This is the picture not so much of a deeply contemplative or philosophical monarch as of a keen, broadly tolerant, versatile one. It is, in short, the likeness of the kingly patron, awakening and encouraging the activities of his subjects, rather than of the cloistered investigator, buried in his books or his laboratory.

With this idea of him all the accounts of his reign, a reign comparable in some ways to the "spacious times of great Elizabeth," not unfairly agree. We do not get all of Solomon in his grand enterprise of building that appendage to his palace called the Temple; we do not get therein what he had most at heart. He was more a man of the world than of religion. He it was who first, among

[1] 1 Kings iv, 29.

the Hebrews, felt the touch of an interest and sympathy greater than tribal and national. True, his interest outside of Palestine, genuinely Hebrew, was largely that of the trader and collector; but that was something, and that fact may have had its part in determining the thrifty business tone of Solomonic Wisdom. And the thing happened that always happens: larger commercial intercourse brought larger appreciations, and out of these was soon coined wisdom. You remember how penetratively Ruskin catches the essentially commercial spirit of the early Wisdom utterance. "Some centuries," he says, "before the Christian era, a Jew merchant, largely engaged in business on the Gold Coast, and reported to have made one of the largest fortunes of his time (held also in repute for much practical sagacity), left among his ledgers some general maxims concerning wealth, which have been preserved, strangely enough, even to our own days." [1]

Though of course we must trace differently the origin of the Book of Proverbs, which is here referred to, we do not amiss to preserve for future notice the business tone here assumed for Solomon, the note of thrift and management and success, which must be recognized by the side of the

[1] Ruskin, *Unto this Last*, Essay iii.

religious strain, when we come to analyze the tissue of Wisdom. As we shall see, the business spirit of the Wisdom literature, deriving its tone perhaps from the era of this first Hebrew trader and importer, was not only its source of strength, sanity, character; this very spirit also, more than anything else, was its storm-centre, where were brewed the attacks, the remonstrances, the reforms, which from time to time Wisdom had to encounter.

Now how shall we image to ourselves King Solomon's relation to the Wisdom culture of his time? There are several royal personages of English history with whom it may be suggestive to compare him. Shall it be, then, King Alfred the Great, who, having by hard struggle delivered his people from a foreign foe, yearned to help their minds also, and in person translated into their rugged vernacular Boethius and Orosius and St. Gregory and the Venerable Bede, in order that his beloved nation might have ideas to live by? There is a note of magnanimity and self-forgetting toil here, which we miss in the too luxurious king of Israel. Well, then, shall it be Queen Elizabeth? whose court was a hive of wits and sonneteers; who herself, an accomplished scholar, "could talk poetry with Spenser and philosophy with Bruno;

. . . could discuss Euphuism with Lyly, and enjoy the chivalry of Essex; . . . could turn from talk of the last fashions to pore with Cecil over despatches and treasury books; . . . could pass from tracking traitors with Walsingham to settle points of doctrine with Parker, or to calculate with Frobisher the chances of a north-west passage to the Indies." [1] But here we miss the single-mindedness, the keenly earnest mood, and probably the personal skill of authorship, which we reasonably attribute to the Hebrew monarch. We come nearer to our parallel, I think, surprising as it may appear, in King James the First, that gabbling undignified king who, though a ripe scholar, full of shrewdness and mother-wit, and though "a voluminous author on subjects which ranged from predestination to tobacco," yet balanced up so ill on the practical side that he was dubbed "the wisest fool in Christendom." [2] Only a little further propagation of the same discordant traits was needed to make up the character of his grandson, Charles the Second, who "never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one."

Of course I would not think of making this parallel go on all fours; and undoubtedly, as King

[1] Green, *History of the English People*, vol. ii, p. 318.

[2] Green, *A Short History of the English People*, chap. viii, section 2.

Solomon was not a wise fool, but (at least in his doting old age) a very foolish wise man, he was incomparably the greater personage. But there is something in the way he descended into the arena of learning himself, and wrought by the side of his sages to give tone and character to their work, even surpassing them in their own sphere of skill, which makes us think of these two monarchs, Solomon and James the First, together. Solomon's impact on the culture of Wisdom was doubtless much more direct and personal than any patronage or encouragement bestowed by the English king; an impact so substantial that from the Proverbs of Solomon, the composition of which may have begun soon after his time, to the Wisdom of Solomon, written less than two centuries before Christ, a long line of literary activity traces its paternity to him. But so also, by a striking coincidence, just three centuries since the modern ruler was called from Scotland to the English throne,[1] we are still calling the book which we revere the most, and in which we read the purest English in the world, King James's Version.

Here, then, I think, is a reasonable way of making plain to our imagination the beginnings of the culture of Wisdom. In the spacious times of King

[1] This was written in 1904.

Solomon, when in an era of settledness and prosperity the Hebrew nation was awake as never before to the things of the mind, there came to recognition a class of men whose self-appointed occupation was to explore the marvellous new world opening to them, and to coördinate its visible facts with inner principles. The names of some of the men who thus became noted have come down to us; set by the side of the king's name, to be sure, and to the greater glory of the latter, but with a relative distinction of their own. "For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all nations round about." [1] This reads as if King Solomon had associated himself with the inquiring, aggressive, intellectual spirits of his time because he had a bent that way, just as King James the First had a bent to theology; and as if his royal comradeship and patronage had brought into existence an order or guild of wise men, a kind of university, for research into the truths of life and for putting the results on record.

The guild thus originated had from the outset an immense advantage. It was a court institution, and its manner of composition, or utterance, as it

[1] 1 Kings iv, 31.

was the chosen culture of kings, had the *éclat*, the distinction, of being fashionable, and of being in the hands of accredited men of letters. This gave it authority and national repute. Soon other nations caught the infection, and responded to the revival of learning in Judea. The Queen of Sheba came from afar to learn more about it. Thus the university of Jerusalem, as we may call it, began its career under most favorable and inspiring auspices, and its output of Wisdom gained attention at once.

That this order of court sages continued its activity long beyond the reign of King Solomon, composing and compiling utterances of Wisdom and putting upon them the Solomonic hall-mark, like a kind of royal *imprimatur*, seems evident from that striking verse at the head of the twenty-fifth chapter of Proverbs: "These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." This reads as if the "men of Hezekiah" were merely scribes, whose business it was to call in from the past, and perhaps from its precarious currency among the people, what the world would not willingly let die. I am disposed to think, however, that their occupation was more creative than this; that it was more like George Herbert's ideal of the studious man, to

"copy fair what time hath blurr'd." At any rate, the fact remains significant that there were "men of Hezekiah" at all, engaged after so many years in the patient dissemination of Wisdom; even though the enthusiasm of the initial impulse, or of originative composition, may have passed.

Further, it would seem that this guild of sages, unlike the orders of prophets and priests, became, and perhaps was from the beginning, a kind of international institution, a literary court or clearing-house, in which all thinkers, of whatever religion or nation, could meet on common ground and see eye to eye. Solomon's "largeness of heart" itself would contribute to this character of it; and perhaps, indeed, as in building his temple so in founding his university, he was borrowing his idea from other nations. When his wisdom is estimated, it already seems to have established cults to compare with: it "excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt."[1] Here is an element of distinction which we surely must not neglect in our large assessment of the Wisdom literature. The prophets were intensely national; their supreme concern being to wean their people from the degrading idolatries of other nations, or from entangling alliances with

[1] 1 Kings iv, 30.

them; or in later days, to make their own nation so comely on its own peculiar lines that other nations would flock to conform with its ideals like doves to their windows. The priests, in like manner, were jealously rigid to preserve the law and ritual of their national God, Jehovah. Never could they consent to stray beyond that narrow enclosure. In the thought of the Wisdom books, however, we are moving in a more liberal atmosphere. It is calculated not for the Jew exclusively, nor for national issues, but for man as man, and as individual man. It is brought home not to the nation as such, nor is it concerned with a particular scheme of theology or ceremonial or statesmanship. It is addressed to the individual as an integral member of any and every body politic; and its religion is of a kind deeper than forms of worship. All this betokens a kind of thinking on which different nations could stand together, seeking a solution of life in which all could share.

A noteworthy feature of this quality of Wisdom is the fact that in the later Wisdom books, Job and Ecclesiastes, the name Jehovah is sparingly used;[1] the name Elohim or Eloah, which can designate any nation's deity, being the term that is employed as meaning the same to all. In Job, too, the sacri-

[1] Cf. e. g. *Epic of the Inner Life*, p. 202, note l. 20.

fice that is described, when Job worships in behalf of his sons, is of the primitive patriarchal kind, such as Noah offered before national altars were erected. Another fact, too, must not miss notice. The friends of Job, typical sages and men of philosophical authority, all come from lands foreign to Judaism: Eliphaz, their senior and leader, being from Teman in the land of Edom, a place so mentioned in connection with its wisdom [1] that we may regard him as the representative of the university of Teman. Job himself was not a resident of Judea nor of Palestine, but of Uz, on the edge of the great plains eastward of that country. So we see how the order of sages, with their common range of inquiry, and their free interchange of views, set up a kind of clearing-house of ideas for all the lands.

When we come to examine the substance of their doctrine, we see that the ideas themselves have the same cosmopolitan or rather universal character. We find in it something analogous to that universal language of music; wherein the German Bach and the Austrian Mozart and the Italian Verdi and the Hungarian Dvorâk and the Pole Tschaikowsky and the Jew Mendelssohn all speak to us in an elemental language both theirs and ours, which to a musical nature needs no translation.

[1] See, for instance, Jeremiah xlix, 7.

Of the *personnel* of the sages, not much remains to be said. There is a dash and brilliancy about King Solomon's exploits in judgment and shrewdness which suggests that in its beginnings the literary culture of Wisdom may have been largely in the hands of young men, the natural mates of so youthful a patron. This, however, was not quite the natural fitness of things. As years go on, we associate the cult more with men of age and experience; so that in place of the wise, to whom Jeremiah attributes counsel, Ezekiel gives the same function to the ancients.[1] Youth, in fact, comes to be quite at a discount in connection with Wisdom; so much so that when Elihu, in the Book of Job, comes in to give his casting-vote in the controversy between Job and his friends, it is with an apology for his youth: —

> "Young am I in days, and ye are hoary;
> Wherefore I shrank and was afraid
> To utter unto you what I know.
> I said, Days should speak,
> And multitude of years should make known wisdom."[2]

Men of weight and experience, of seasoned observation and ripe reflection, — such, ideally, were

[1] Compare Jeremiah xviii, 18, with Ezekiel vii, 26.

[2] Job xxxii, 6, 7. In quoting the Book of Job I give my own translation, from my book *The Epic of the Inner Life.*

the sages. Nay, the element of old age comes by and by to think almost too much of itself; it becomes intolerant and inaccessible to new ideas, — as Eliphaz, speaking for the guild, says to Job: —

"What knowest thou that we know not?
What understandest thou, and the same is not in us?
Yea, the grey-haired, yea, the aged man, is amongst us,
Fuller of days than thy father." [1]

This rigid intolerance has indeed to be checked, if Wisdom would hold itself flexible and progressive, and if it would correct its errors. So Job, in his attack on its hardened orthodoxy, has to administer a rebuke to its assumptions: —

"Doth wisdom dwell with hoary heads,
And is length of days understanding?" [2]

There is, however, a gracious and fatherly side to old age, which is much more in evidence; and in general it is much safer to set store by its developed conservatism than to expose Wisdom to the risks and rashness of youth. And so we may figure to ourselves the sages as men who by time and seasoned contemplation, as also by much interchange of thought among themselves, had earned in the community the right to be heard and heeded. Though there was that freemasonry

[1] Job xv, 9, 10. [2] Job xii, 12.

of ideas between them, they did not herd together or separate themselves from the world of affairs; their lore was not esoteric; they were to be found here and there, in the places of concourse, where truth was to be learned and where counsel was needed. Job's reminiscence of his own "autumn days" gives a very engaging portrayal of the typical wise counselor and friend, as he makes his wisdom and personality felt: —

> "When I went forth to the gate by the city;
> When I fixed my seat in the open place;
> Young men saw me, and withdrew themselves,
> And old men arose and stood up;
> Princes checked their words,
> And laid their hand upon their mouth;
> The voice of nobles was hushed,
> And their tongue cleaved to their palate. . . .
> Unto me they gave ear, and waited;
> And they were silent, listening for my counsel.
> After my words they spake not again;
> For upon them my speech descended gently,
> And they waited for me as for the rain,
> And opened their mouths wide as for the latter rain."[1]

Scarcely less attractive, in another way, is the picture of the sage, or scribe, who reaches people by his pen, the later sage Koheleth: "And further, since Koheleth was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; and he composed, and compiled, and arranged many lessons. Koheleth sought to find

[1] Job xxix, 7–10, 21–23.

words of pleasantness; and what was written was upright, words of truth."[1]

There is hope for a people that has such counsel in its gates, and accords it honor and obedience.

Thus, from a few obscure and scanty hints of history, I have endeavored to reconstruct, in the light of to-day, the Hebrew order of sages; so that we might image to ourselves how they originated, and what place they filled in the organism of the national life. They were men of the people, who knew the people from the lowliest up, and who had the good of every class at heart; who knew each other, and wrought together at one consistent vision and ideal of life, which in a way better than they knew shaped itself into a working philosophy; who, having the sunshine of royalty to favor their beginnings, stepped providentially into a position where their counsel could have free and thankful course. As to how they did their work, and what literary vehicle they adopted, we have not obscure hints but a group of undying books to tell us; and the strength and beauty of these are palpable, laying hold upon all. To consider this literary vehicle, its principle, its inner values, its development, shall be the business of the next chapter.

[1] Ecclesiastes xii, 9, 10. My quotations from Ecclesiastes are in my own translation, from my book *Words of Koheleth*.

II

THE LITERARY VEHICLE

THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM SHAPING AN ART

I. The *mashal:* the phrasal mould.
II. The *mashal:* the inner literary value.
III. The claim of connexion and continuity.

II

THE LITERARY VEHICLE

OUR main interest, in the chapters that follow, centres in what the Hebrew sages themselves had most at heart, the essential trend and truth of their counsel, or what we may call the soul of Wisdom. But souls have bodies; and it is through contact with a body, through seeing a face, hearing a voice, grasping a hand, that we gain access to the inner place where the soul resides. And the body of Wisdom, that which gives it shape and comeliness, voice and power, is its literary form. This distinctive mould and type of utterance is its vehicle, whereby it is made portable and moving, whereby it is borne strongly on, through its various phases and issues, to the summit of its mission.

In spite of the ocean of literature in which today our minds swim and subsist, people have strangely vague ideas of the literary art and what it means. Especially is this true as applied to the Bible. Much is said nowadays about studying the Bible as literature; and it is hard to say which class of students is the more at sea, those who

know a great deal about the Bible and very little about literature, or those who know a great deal about literature and very little about the Bible. At any rate, it is to an exceedingly crude and imperfect degree that the combination has hitherto been made, in such wise as to identify the expressional art of the Bible with the literary values that are so potent to move us in our daily thinking. Why, to many the simple fact that the Bible is a real book, like "Hamlet" or "In Memoriam," is as wonderful a discovery as was that of M. Jourdain in Molière's play, who, beginning his education late, found to his exceeding delight and pride that he had actually been talking prose all his life. But to many, too, this literary approach to the Bible seems like a side issue, a subsidiary matter; pleasant indeed for its culture interest, and well adapted for evening talks with light refreshments, but remote from the real inwardness of the thing. It is to them as if, instead of making our exploration of the Bible culminate, as the revivalists do, in making labelled heaps of all the "blesseds" and "whosoevers," or as the theologians do, in squaring everything by a certain aspect of vicarious atonement, — what they call "the blood," — we should, just for passing amusement, note what it says about flowers, or

seas and mountains, or the moon. But so to think, whether about its literary or its essential character, is sadly to belittle a very vital and commanding subject. The literary approach to the Bible will not bear to be parcelled out so. It insists on taking the whole subject, theological, practical, and all, into its jurisdiction. The large truth is that, as Stevenson says, "the business of life is mainly carried on by means of this difficult art of literature, and according to a man's proficiency in that art shall be the freedom and the fulness of his intercourse with other men." [1] This applies to the Bible, that book which has won universal homage as an archetypal literature, not less than to other books, but more. The freedom and fulness of *its* intercourse with men, too, are due to its literary power: not only to its high theme, which itself is a literary element, but also to the way things are put, — the inevitable word, the moving figure, the arresting phrase, the skilfully turned sentence, the architectonics of the thought. All these are the means by which soul communicates with soul, the vehicle of the business of life.

Let us not be too suspicious of this idea of literary art, as if it meant nothing but rhetorical tricks and glamours, or as if it reached on only to gor-

[1] Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque: Truth of Intercourse.*

geous air-castles of poetry and romance. It is a much more honest and sturdy thing than this notion would imply. It is in fact just the art of giving to a truth the life which its intrinsic nature and its fit audience demand; nothing else. Let us, to illustrate, take that remark of the foregoing chapter, that the Hebrew Wisdom, beginning with detached observations on life, grew into a body of utterance which may be called a veritable philosophy, adapted throughout to scholars indeed, but also to the common man who most needs it. Now a philosophy is essentially a scientific thing: clear cold truth; and supposably all the receptiveness we need bring to it is head enough to understand it, and to lay it up in our memory and reason. But — to quote Stevenson again — "there will always be hours when we refuse to be put off by the feint of explanation, nicknamed science; and demand instead some palpitating image of our estate, that shall represent the troubled and uncertain element in which we dwell, and satisfy reason by the means of art."[1] Somehow, though our reason and sense of fact are convinced of the solid truth that the square of $x+y$ is equal to $x^2+2xy+y^2$, yet we want something more concrete than this, something that shall take

[1] Stevenson, *Virginibus Puerisque: Pan's Pipes.*

hold of us, that shall picture things, that shall make us realize how things move in life. Well, that is just what the literary element brings to reinforce and fill out the scientific. It applies accurately to the way Wisdom advanced from the severely cut aphorisms of Proverbs to the glowing portrayal of Our Lady Wisdom, and on to the intense eloquence of Job, with its dramatic scene and persons and plot; then on to Ecclesiastes, with its assumed confessions of a disillusioned king; then further on to the New Testament parables, with their homely "truth embodied in a tale." It is all one tissue of literary art, which begins to appear and make itself felt as soon as the truth does, and which adapts itself finely to its task, as it knocks for better access to the beating heart of man. A small thing it is to say we have here a literary road to traverse; we miss the fulness and balance of our subject if we pursue any other.

I

The mould, the type, of Wisdom utterance, like its thinking, is ideally simple and direct, but also flexible and limpid. What we are concerned with here is to trace how, in accordance with the thought itself, the form too passed through a period of

change and growth, — how in a true sense, as demonstrated by thought and form alike, the literature of Wisdom was an evolution.

As the Hebrew sages worked among the common people, giving counsel in the city gates and market-places, so, we may assume, they chose advisedly a vehicle of utterance which answered to the popular idiom and taste. What this was has been hinted in the early folk utterances that were quoted in the foregoing chapter: in the epigrammatic phrasing of Samson's riddle, and in the applied similitudes of Jotham's parable. The common folk, it would seem, liked such a challenge to keen wits as is involved in these riddling maxims; just as the English folk like stories of battle and adventure, and as the Arabs like tales of sensuous fancy. In its classic and so to say chiselled purity the Hebrew form may best be seen, perhaps, in the section of the Book of Proverbs extending from the tenth to the middle of the twenty-second chapter, and headed specifically The Proverbs of Solomon; which section is probably the oldest body of Wisdom counsel preserved to us. There we can see what the folk utterance becomes when it is reduced from oral to written form, freed from extraneous elements and trimmings, and presented in its essentials, as it were crystallized.

As we turn over this collection of proverbs we observe that each verse is simply a couplet, a pair of lines answering pithily to each other. In that one couplet the lesson in hand is all comprised. The next verse contains a new lesson, generally quite unconnected with its neighbor verses. So far as subject is concerned, we might as well call them chapters as verses; for each embodies a whole topic in one brief circuit. The Hebrew name for this peculiar structure of assertion is *mashal*, which term is the word oftenest translated proverb. The Book of Proverbs is *Sepher M'shalim*, the Book of Mashals. The three thousand wise utterances of King Solomon were mashals. So also were Balaam's discourses in the Book of Numbers;[1] and when after a pause Job takes up his discourse anew, the Hebrew says he continues his mashal.[2] The literary work in which Ecclesiastes was engaged was the composing and compiling and arranging of mashals.[3] Evidently this is a term of pretty comprehensive meaning. The mere idea of couplet, however the lines are rhymed together, does not fill it out; neither does our word proverb, as we ordinarily understand

[1] Numbers xxiii, 7, 18; xxiv, 3, 15, 20, 23.
[2] Job xxvii, 1; xxix, 1.
[3] Ecclesiastes xii. 9.

it. What, then, shall we make of it, — what in its most fundamental significance is a mashal?

The word means primarily a likeness or comparison; and all that it came eventually to stand for grew probably out of the elementary fact that one thing was employed to elucidate another. This might be brought about in different ways, or on larger and smaller scales. When the wise woman whom Joab employed so deftly induced King David to decree the restoration of Absalom from banishment, she did it by means of what we call a parallel case, or parity of reasoning, so skilfully managed that when the king passed judgment on the one case he had committed himself to the principle of the other.[1] The story of Nathan, too, in the case of Uriah, was a similar parallel case, embodied in a homely tale of a poor man and a ewe lamb.[2] Evidently King David was keenly susceptible to the values of spiritual analogy; perhaps that faculty was his contribution to his brilliant son's largeness of heart. But also, in skilful literary hands this comparing might be made by using an object of sense perception to picture a concept of the mind, or a familiar thing to simplify a relatively strange one; in other words, by employing a simile. When it is said of King

[1] 2 Samuel xiv, 4–24. [2] 2 Samuel xii, 1–7.

Solomon that "he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes," [1] — this is what we understand: not that like Gilbert White of Selborne he made extensive researches in natural history, but rather that from all these fields he drew similitudes and analogies, to set forth his teachings of Wisdom. A charming glimpse this affords us of that naïve zestful literary insight which, like Shakespeare's banished duke,

> "Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything." [2]

Solomon was so clever at that kind of analogical thinking that his fame has survived through the world and the ages; but no impulse is more primitive and natural, as soon as one's thoughts are awake to the meanings of life, than to inquire what there is in things unseen and inner that is like things we see. We live largely in analogies and similitudes; as an apostle puts it, we see as in a mirror. And though so spontaneous, this manner of thinking is by no means rudimental or crude; it can be carried to any depth. From these clever analogies of Solomon, taking note of common objects of nature, our thoughts run forward

[1] 1 Kings iv, 33.

[2] *As you Like It*, Act ii, sc. i.

to the frequent question of Him who said, "Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of heaven?" and we recognize that our Lord's parables themselves, making use of pearls and coins and leaven and mustard seed and field lilies, were a divinely perfected form of the mashal, at once ideally simple and endlessly deep. Nay, we think also how the loftiest poetic minds have filled life with illuminative similitude; how Goethe, at the summit of his greatest literary creation, could sing, —

> "Alles Vergängliche
> Ist nur ein Gleichniss," —

everything transitory is only a parable, a mashal, the shadow of something real and eternal.

In the three hundred and seventy-five proverbs which make up the section of the book already referred to, we find the mashal reduced to its severest and most condensed terms; suggestive perhaps of the labor of the file which was deemed necessary to make them classical work of the Solomon school. Each one, as I have said, is a couplet, in which the second line takes up and completes the circuit of thought started by the first. This is to Hebrew poetry what rhyme is to ours; it *is* a veritable rhyme, only a rhyme of thought rather than of sound and syllable. I need not go here minutely into the varieties of relation

that may exist between the lines.[1] Sometimes the mashal is just a plain simile: for example, —

"As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes,
So is the sluggard to them that send him."

Sometimes it says essentially the same thing twice over in different words; as, —

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Sometimes the comparison between things is made by the word *better;* as, —

"Better is a dry morsel, and quietness therewith,
Than an house full of sacrifices with strife."

In the majority of cases, in the early part of this collection, the mashal embodies some form of contrast, or antithesis; as, —

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing;
But righteousness delivereth from death."

As we go on, however, the proportions change.[2] In brief, the effort is to make the lesson so pithy and pointed that it will awaken thought and at the same time leave a germ of instruction or inspiration in the memory. This, as we see, is a perfectly spontaneous rhetorical device, so natural that we never think of it as literary art. But what else is it?

[1] For the cited examples, see Proverbs x, 26; xvi, 32; xvii, 1; x, 2.

[2] This matter of proportional distribution will be taken up in the next chapter.

I have taken these examples from what I assume, with scholars, to have been the original Wisdom collection; representing as it does the kind of crystallized germinal utterance which, like the venerable saws and maxims so familiar in our daily life, has reached its form by long seasoning and attrition, and which in its fated phrasing of result seems never to have been made but to have grown. We get the same feeling about some of our old-time hymn tunes, "Old Hundred" or "Dundee" or "St. Ann's." It seems an impertinence to suppose that a master of music should ever have had to put the notes of them painfully and studiously together, revising and erasing and trying again until he got them just right. They seem rather to have sprung up in our own minds as truly as in his, and we cannot remember when we did not know them.

And so we easily deceive ourselves about the art of the proverbs. An easy thing to condense a life's experience or a world truth into the crisp saying which, as soon as it is uttered, commends itself as inevitably, eternally right? Well, it looks ideally easy. A story is told of a university student whose estimate of himself was not over small, who once remarked to his teacher, old Dr. Francis Wayland, "Huh! I don't see anything so wonderful in

proverbs; any one could make loads of them." "Make some," was the doctor's laconic response. Perhaps he did; but we have not the record of it, nor the proverbs.

On the other hand, we have from many of the finest literary minds testimony of the long stern severity of the art which would reach the point where it has completely concealed its processes in the rightness of the perfected utterance. Beyond other forms the mashal seeks the note of the inevitable. Shakespeare puts this supreme quality thus: —

> "Yet nature is made better by no mean
> But nature makes that mean: so, over that art
> Which you say adds to nature, is an art
> That nature makes. . . . This is an art
> Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
> The art itself is nature." [1]

Such artistry begins with the simple endeavor to reduce the assertion to the smallest number of words that will carry the sense, while each word chosen is the word that weighs the most. But underneath the workmanship is a great depth of nature, experience, personality, which precipitates itself into vital form. Without this latter quality, as we see in the pinchbeck aphorisms of Disraeli, we have only a kind of posturing with phrases.

[1] *Winter's Tale*, Act iv. sc. 4.

Here is a stanza of literary counsel which I think well embodies the philosophy of the mashal: —

> "Prune thou thy words; the thoughts control
> That o'er thee swell and throng: —
> They will condense within thy soul,
> And change to purpose strong." [1]

And the following description from Joubert, who for his lifelong devotion to exact utterance is eminently entitled to speak, might have been made with reference to the proverbs: "To finish and complete your thought! — how long it takes, how rare it is, what an immense delight! For finished thought easily makes its way into the mind; to please, it need not even be beautiful; it is enough that it should be finished. The condition of the soul from which it springs communicates itself to other souls; and conveys to them its own repose." [2]

These marks of finish are especially noticeable in the work of the early Solomonic sages, with their classic model of the two-line epigram. Their proverbs, as has been remarked by scholars, are not the rough-hewn, run-wild maxims such as are gathered from the lips of the common folk, but rather the studied utterance of men of letters. They derive from the folk's idiom, indeed, and

[1] Cardinal Newman is the author of this. I quote it at second hand from Harrison, *Tennyson, Ruskin, Mill*, p. 70.

[2] Joubert, *A Selection from his Thoughts*, p. 208.

employ it; but impart to it that higher power of nature which is artistic. One distinguishes in them the influence of a threefold ideal: fact, truth, charm. The sense of fact that underlies them produces the rudiments of keen observation and verification, in a word, science, and the scientific temper. The shaping of truth, the next stage, connotes that the fact is in proper combination and proportion with nature and life, so as to work in character. And the charm is the literary touch and finish; the attractive, alluring, stimulating quality. It is interesting to note how Koheleth gives expression to this naïve ideal: "Koheleth sought to find words of pleasantness; and what was written was upright, words of truth."

There are indications, not numerous nor obtrusive, but still suggestive, that the makers of proverbs discovered that they were not only coiners of wisdom, but men of letters. We get in the later utterances a little sense of the shop. This is what one would naturally expect, and what may be paralleled elsewhere. As the composition of mashals went on, passing from a happy inspiration or zestful creativeness into a kind of manufacture, and especially as it so prospered in the refined elegance of a royal court, it would be apt to betray here and there a touch of artificiality or self-con-

sciousness, or perhaps be a little over-precious, like the Euphuistic fancies and conceits of Queen Elizabeth's court. We can think what elegant young littérateurs would do in the genial presence of a young king who could say such clever things about trees and beasts and fowl and creeping things and fishes. Here is a specimen of the kind of cleverness that was fashionable at Elizabeth's royal receptions; a cloying ingenuity of comparison, tricked out with alliteration, which no one now can read to any length. Euphues says: —

"The foul Toade hath a faire stone in his head: the fine golde is found in the filthy earth: the sweet kernell lyeth in the hard shell: vertue is harboured in the heart of him that most men esteeme mishapen. Contrariwise, if we respect more the outward shape, then the inward habit, . . . into how many mischiefes do wee fall! into what blindnesse are we ledde! Doe we not commonly see that in painted pottes is hidden the deadlyest poyson? that in the greenest grasse is ye greatest Serpent? in the cleerest water the vglyest Toade? Doth not experience teach vs, that in the most curious Sepulcher are enclosed rotten bones? That the Cypresse tree beareth a faire leafe, but no fruite? That the Estridge carieth faire feathers, but ranke flesh? How frantick are

those louers which are caried away with the gaye glistering of the fine face!" [1]

And so on, interminably. Perhaps Solomon's remarks on natural history were a little on this order. But the Hebrew Wisdom was too religiously in earnest, and the Hebrew genius too practical and business-like, took itself too seriously, to become a prey to such elegant conceits. So the dominant strain of Wisdom became something very different. Late in its history, however, when it is running low for fresh thinking, and beginning to tend toward the solemn pottering of the scribes, the art begins to stick out a little toward the made product, the artificial. When, for instance, we read the so-called numerical maxims of Agur, toward the end of the Book of Proverbs:

"The horse-leech hath two daughters, Give, Give.
There are three things that are never satisfied,
Yea, four that say not, Enough. . . .
There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
Yea, four which I know not. . . .
For three things the earth doth tremble,
And for four, which it cannot bear. . . .
There are four things which are little upon the earth,
But they are exceeding wise. . . .
There are three things which are stately in their march,
Yea, four which are stately in going;" [2] —

[1] Lyly, *Euphues*, Arber's ed., p. 53 (punctuation revised).
[2] Proverbs xxx, *passim*.

and when we note that the eulogy of the virtuous woman, in the last chapter of Proverbs, is in the original an acrostic on the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, — well, the subject-matter is sound, but somehow, the working of the mashal machine gets a trifle audible. If, as I think, the successors of the court sages were the orders of rabbis and scribes, we have some means of judging what the proverb can run into when it has got beyond the inspiration of large issues of truth and is simply pumping the old engine. In the Talmudic book called "Pirké Aboth," or "Sayings of the Jewish Fathers," a whole chapter is devoted to these numerical things; of which this is a specimen: "There are four characters in those who sit under the wise: a sponge; a funnel; a strainer; and a bolt-sieve. A sponge, which sucks up all; a funnel, which lets in here and lets out there; a strainer, which lets out the wine and keeps back the dregs; a bolt-sieve, which lets out the pollard and keeps back the flour." [1]

A far cry this from the severe classicism of the early proverbs; but it is what we may expect when form outstrips weightiness of content. On the whole, however, the wonder is that the body of Wisdom has retained so little lumber or artificial-

[1] Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, p. 91.

ity; that the wealth of thought and the phrasal mould balance up so well.

II

From this primitive and exterior form of the mashal I go on to bring up another trait which will enable us to get a little more closely at its inner literary value; noting at the same time how it remained candid and sanely tempered. The Jewish folk, as we have seen, were fond of that kind of intercourse wherein was afforded a contest of wits. Samson's riddle throws light on a people's genius. Is it not natural, then, to suppose that something of a riddling character was essential to the Wisdom utterance? that the sages, in obedience to this native Hebrew bent, labored to put their proverbs in such phrase that their hearers would have to lay out some keen thinking of their own upon them and as it were get the right combination, the proper attitude to things, to unlock them?

Yes: there was this element in Wisdom; and doubtless we have to reckon with a tendency common to all who have the keys of knowledge, the tendency to make their knowledge to a degree secret, cryptic, esoteric, a knowledge available only to the initiated. The later scribes, who got rather fonder of having Wisdom, or of being

reputed to have it, than of imparting it, developed quite a fund of cabalistic or secret doctrine. They got to speaking like Tennyson's ancient seer, in sonorous epigrams: —

> "Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards:
> 'Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
> Elusion, and occasion, and evasion'?" [1]

And indeed to an extent this kind of thing is wholesome. Bunyan, in his description of Gaius's feast, in the Second Part of the "Pilgrim's Progress," implies what is the use of such riddling. "While they were thus talking, they were presented with another dish, and 't was a dish of Nuts. Then said some at the Table, 'Nuts spoil tender Teeth, specially the Teeth of Children;' which when Gaius heard, he said, —

> " 'Hard Texts are Nuts (I will not call them cheaters)
> Whose Shells do keep their Kernels from the Eaters.
> Ope then the Shells, and you shall have the Meat,
> They here are brought for you to crack and eat.'" [2]

That the healthy challenge to serious thinking, which is what this riddling implies, is also a means of securing that spiritual combination which alone can unlock this kind of truth, is recognized by our Lord, in the reason He gave for putting his teaching in the form of mashal, or parable.

[1] Tennyson, *Gareth and Lynette.*
[2] Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II.

"Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" His disciples asked in some astonishment. And the reason He gave was, In order that none may understand but those who are rightly receptive. They must have in them some truth with which this truth can affiliate; whosoever hath, to him shall be given; you cannot be nourished except as you assimilate. Thus it was our Lord himself who defined and justified this riddle element in the Wisdom literature. He it was who inherited the genuine Wisdom strain in the New Testament era, when He taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

For the rest, it is through that wholesome tendency to the kind of paradox, or association of remote ideas, which was called a "dark saying" that we get at a very central characteristic of Wisdom, and at the name which best designates its literary fibre. In the same description already quoted from, Bunyan models one of his riddles on a Solomonic proverb: —

"Then said the old Gentleman, 'My good Landlord, while we are cracking your Nuts, if you please, do you open this Riddle: —

> " 'A man there was, tho' some did count him mad,
> The more he cast away the more he had.'

"Then they all gave good heed, wondring what

good Gaius would say; so he sat still awhile, and then thus replied: —

"'He that bestows his Goods upon the Poor,
Shall have as much again, and ten times more.'

"Then said Joseph, 'I dare say Sir, I did not think you could a found it out.'

"'Oh,' said Gaius, 'I have been trained up in this way a great while, nothing teaches like experience. I have learned of my Lord to be kind, and have found by experience that I have gained thereby.

"'There is that scattereth, yet increaseth,
And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to Poverty.
There is that maketh himself Rich, yet hath nothing;
There is that maketh himself Poor, yet hath great Riches.'"[1]

These two proverbs quoted by Gaius are good examples of what is called a "dark saying." We can easily think such a saying out, if we have the fitting spiritual attitude. It is just dark enough to challenge a man's wits to unravel and probe, yet light enough, like the gleam of a lamp behind a screen, to whet curiosity. The couplet in the preface to Proverbs in which this term occurs, and in which several aspects of the mashal are mentioned, Professor Toy thus translates: —

"That he may understand proverb and parable,
The words of sages and their aphorisms."

[1] Gaius quotes from Proverbs xi, 24.

Here is the term of which we have been in search: aphorism. The literature of Wisdom is an aphoristic literature: to its principle of comparison or analogy it adds that pointed, clean-cut, accurately turned phrase which we call aphorism. This term may be taken for its mould, as the other, analogy, may be taken for its dominating essence.

It is advisable to examine this term a little here, on account of the literary values that associate themselves with it. What, then, in its core meaning, so to say, is an aphorism?

We may begin with a description by John Morley, in an essay of his on the subject of Aphorisms. "The essence of aphorism," he says, "is the compression of a mass of thought and observation into a single saying. It is the very opposite of dissertation and declamation; its distinction is not so much ingenuity, as good sense brought to a point; it ought to be neither enigmatical nor flat, neither a truism on the one hand, nor a riddle on the other." [1]

From this it would seem that the riddle element is not of the essence of it, but only a spice or savor to give it life and penetration. And this is true. The claim of Wisdom on the understanding of all men was such a regulative of its literary form

[1] Morley, *Studies in Literature*, p. 59.

that the aphorism must needs be an utterance not hidden or cryptic, but inviting to all. The element that is essential, however, in its diametric contrast to dissertation and declamation, is its uncompromising absoluteness. What it says is no guesswork, but just so. In a word, it is sheer assertion; with no shading, no exceptions, no saving clauses, and no proof at all. You may take it or leave it, but no chance is given you to gainsay it. That is to say, here in the aphorism we have the result, the crystallized conclusion, of a great deal of cerebration, without the processes; it has reached the point where, as soon as it is enunciated, we can *see* its truth; and it is put into pungent and pointed phrase just in order that the reader may be stung to think out the process of cerebration for himself. Lord Bacon, in his wise, solid way, has noted this absoluteness of aphorisms, and what it requires both in writer and reader. "The writing in aphorisms," he says, "hath many excellent virtues, whereto the writing in method doth not approach. For first, it trieth the writer, whether he be superficial or solid: for aphorisms, except they should be ridiculous, cannot be made but of the pith and heart of sciences; for discourse of illustration is cut off; recitals of examples are cut off; discourse of connexion and

order is cut off; descriptions of practice are cut off. So there remaineth nothing to fill the aphorisms but some good quantity of observation: and therefore no man can suffice, nor in reason will attempt, to write aphorisms, but he that is sound and grounded." [1]

Writing in aphorisms, we may illustrate by way of supplement to Lord Bacon, is like painting in fresco. Just as the fresco painter, because his work dries so instantly, must make every touch just right at once, having no chance to alter; so the writer in aphorisms must say the true thing in one absolute assertion; he has no chance to touch up, or tone off, or shade down. If his maxim is over-violent, or over-tame, or crooked, or only half true, it must remain so.

We can think from this what a responsibility the sages assumed by their very manner of expression; how boldly they dipped into life, saying things about duty and destiny which could no more be gainsaid than an axiom, condensing vast experience and insight into assertions on which they felt the weight of a manhood and a world could be hung. Such was essentially the literary mould that they chose for their philosophy of life. It is not speculative nor problematic, but unescapably true.

[1] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book II, xvii, 7.

III

Now this aphoristic mould of utterance is good for some kinds of truth; but not for all. Good for the great inevitable mandates of righteousness and mercy and honor, the life values that we know already but are continually prone to neglect and evade. It is not them that we question; it is ourselves that we need to probe with a great smiting, piercing exaction of conduct. But for a truth that may fairly be called into question as not yet established, or for a truth so laden with exceptions and limitations as to appear only half or three quarters true, something more flexible and compromising than absolute assertion is needed. Not all can see things intuitively; men must be guided by logic and reasoning step by step. Then, too, men come to see that the truths of life hang together, one depending on another, one reinforcing and enriching another. We cannot endure to leave our thoughts a collection of independent maxims, like marbles, each an infinitely repellent particle. They must be alive, with tendrils and tentacles by which they lay hold on each other. In other words, in a growing literature like this of Wisdom, wherein larger areas of life and being come progressively into sight, the claim of continuity, of

felted and interwoven thought, of ideas which bear to others the relation of premises and corollaries, must sooner or later make itself felt, beyond what the detached couplet or trenchant aphorism can afford accommodation for. With the growing body of thought there must keep pace a growing, obedient, flexible vehicle of expression.

This is just what takes place. It shows its effect both in the form and in the mutual relationship of the mashal. The couplet still remains the type, the nucleus of assertion; and in general the Wisdom thought advances, steps forward as it were, by pairs of lines, a kind of thought-rhyme. Pope's heroic couplet, as seen, for instance, in his "Essay on Man," furnishes the nearest English analogy to this kind of structure. But as related to onward progress, there is a great difference in the way these two lines rhyme together. In the earliest collection of proverbs (the section of Solomonic maxims beginning Proverbs x, already referred to) there is a great predominance of the antithetic couplet: contrasts galore between good and wicked, receptive and scorners, industrious and lazy, wise and foolish; for example,—

"Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction:
But he that regardeth reproof shall be honored." [1]

[1] Proverbs xiii, 18.

This kind of proverb just traverses its brief thought circuit, and coming back to the starting-point closes the case; there is nothing more to be said, either by way of reply or of addition; nothing for it but to open a new circuit, on some other subject. The next verse to the one just quoted does not seem to grow out of it, or to have clear relation to it: —

"The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul:
But it is abomination to fools to depart from evil." [1]

As soon, however, as we get beyond this earliest collection, yes, and in increasing proportion before, the hard metallic antithesis begins to yield and melt into a more genial form. The second line of the couplet, instead of glaring at the first in opposition, repeats the idea of the first, or enlarges upon it; so that the two lines are concerned with saying more completely the same thing. But if you can repeat a thing once, you can more than once; it is thrown open for additions; you can go on to give consequences, or reasons, or deeper involvements. This is precisely what takes place as we advance in the proverb book. The very first proverb in the next section (after the prefatory note, Proverbs xxii, 17–21) reads thus: —

"Rob not the poor, because he is poor:
Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:

[1] Proverbs xiii, 19.

For the Lord will plead their cause,
And spoil the soul of those that spoiled them." [1]

Here, the two couplets, each of which is of that parallelistic kind, go on to make a quatrain, the third and fourth lines giving the consequence, or reason, of the first and second. Nor does it stop with quatrains. Once limbered up, the mashal is free to flow on in stanzas of four, six, a dozen lines, as the subject dictates; in which stanzas the similitude begins to revel a little in its own beauty, and blossom into a poem having not only a lesson, but an atmosphere and a charm of imagery. Here is an example of the freer mashal; it comes in the Hezekian collection, and is entitled by Professor Moulton a "Folk-Song of Good Husbandry:" —

"Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
And look well to thy herds.
For riches are not for ever;
And doth the crown endure to every generation?
The hay appeareth, and the tender grass showeth itself,
And herbs of the mountains are gathered.
The lambs are for thy clothing,
And the goats are the price of the field.
And thou shalt have goats' milk enough for thy food,
For the food of thy household,
And for the maintenance for thy maidens." [2]

This is conceived not merely in the hard didactic

[1] Proverbs xxii, 22, 23.

[2] Proverbs xxvii, 23–27.

spirit, but with some degree of the lyric, that is, as a song; and from this we can feel how much more genial and expansive a thing the mashal has become than we noted in those early antitheses. Nay, in one case something like a refrain, a peculiarly lyric device, is used, the same refrain for two songs: namely, the song of The Sluggard, in the sixth chapter, and of The Field of the Slothful, in the twenty-fourth.[1]

So this synonymous couplet, as it is called, which becomes the prevailing Wisdom type, reveals good capabilities. If not a good instrument of philosophical disquisition, of reasoning and slow research and speculation, it can by a kind of accumulation of detail do very telling work in describing things. This is what it does. It is an instrument of moving and trenchant portrayal, wherein concrete images flash and glitter and burn themselves into the mind. It begins with just collecting together couplets in groups on some related topic: on fools, on the king, on the sluggard, on social pests ; approaching each topic, so to say, by several picturing thoughts or images. This we see in the early part of the Hezekian section, which begins Proverbs xxv. But what it is capable of developing to, we can see in the praises

[1] Proverbs vi, 10, 11; xxiv, 33, 34.

of Our Lady Wisdom, in the early-late chapters of Proverbs, and the sublime address from the whirlwind, in Job, and the portrayal of decaying old age, in the last chapter of Ecclesiastes. From these, which are as great description as there is in the world, we can think to what majestic heights of poetry the sustained mashal may rise.

To realize how this felt demand for continuity of explanation and argument, of interrelation and grounding, makes itself felt in the larger mutual relationship of the mashal, we must think of a whole book of Wisdom at once. In Job, where the first great central attack is made on the motives and sanctions of Wisdom, there are two underflowing currents of continuous progress, acting to bind the mashal couplets together. There is first a current of argument or controversy, especially on the part of the friends of Job, in which they are trying on their narrow grounds to justify the baffling ways of God to men, and to maintain a Wisdom which has congealed into a system and an orthodoxy. Then deeper than this, and bearing this along as it were on its surface, there is a tidal current of narrative, with its fitted scene, its *dramatis personæ*, its progressive plot, its *dénouement;* wherein we read how the soul of manhood, in the person of Job, rises against its doom, and

how in the more vital grounding of Wisdom it makes progress to an immensely higher table-land of loyalty and revelation.

In Ecclesiastes the unitary current, though not less real, is more complex and less skilfully wrought out. As in Job, a character is assumed, the character of King Solomon, at once king and sage; but it is only to a very limited extent that his character figures as the hero, or personage, of a story. The current by which the thought is here made continuous and progressive is rather a kind of inductive process, an accumulation of facts and enigmas of life, from which, when all are honestly owned, conclusions are drawn. In this process the mashal becomes more prosaic, and tends to loosen up and dissolve the rigid couplet form, thus becoming better adapted to philosophic thinking; but the vehicle is a rather unhandy one, at the best.[1]

The main thing to note about all this is, that in the later Wisdom books we are no longer to wander as we will in an arbitrary miscellany of maxims and epigrams, each independent of the others. Rather, the utterances of Wisdom have found a mutual relation and dependence, a course and a goal. In other words, Wisdom has grown into a coördinated system, which can defend itself

[1] See my *Words of Koheleth*, pp. 176–179.

and stop the gaps in its body of thought. And the form of utterance, beginning though it did with the self-closing circuit of parallelism and antithesis, has proved itself flexible enough to keep pace with this growth; enlarging its tether, rising or falling, smiting into invective or flowing into sustained imagery, as the large tissue of the subject revealed the demand.

To trace all this is to trace a distinctively literary process and history. It corresponds to the effort of Wisdom not to make an erudite system, but to domesticate sound counsel among men. To this end it has not been careful to stand on its dignity, or to keep its thought severe and abstruse. Its tendency has been uniformly away from the esoteric, away even from the cryptic and riddling, except so far as these would give spice and provoke thought. And so it has not hesitated, as the issue demanded, to vitalize itself, as we have already heard Stevenson express it, by "some palpitating image of our estate, that shall represent the troubled and uncertain element in which we dwell, and satisfy reason by the means of art."[1] To verify this, we need do no more than note the consummate literary art of the Book of Job, which when all elements are reckoned turns out to be a

[1] See page 56, above.

good deal like a novel. And this art is kept close to the common man, to his ways of thought and feeling, and to his vital interests. With its fuller sense of dealing with a correlated and continuous truth, rooted in a deep life-philosophy, it becomes less severe and conscious of itself; more genial and comrade-like; as we see in the supreme utterances of Wisdom that sound forth from the light and joy of the New Testament era. In the Epistle of James, for instance, we find not even the assumed air and distinction of a sage, looking down on disciples from a height, and saying, "My son;" but rather the intimacy of a fellow learner, writing a familiar letter and saying, "My brethren." And, at once highest and winsomest of all, in the New Testament parables the deepest values of life and wisdom have wholly broken down the pose and formalism of the mashal and embodied themselves in the limpid flow and freedom of an illustrative tale.

> "For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
> Where truth in closest words shall fail,
> When truth embodied in a tale
> Shall enter in at lowly doors." [1]

To give the highest truth access through lowly doors to that great House of Life where learned

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.

and unlearned, kings and servants, dwell together and share in one ideal of manhood,—is it not an act deriving from the unseen Love which works unweariedly for the uplifting of every soul? It is even so; and this very literary development of Wisdom, with its glowing passion, its sense of the world's beauty, its naïve artistry of word and story, reveals the landmarks in a vast movement of the Spirit of God witnessing with the spirit of man.

Thus the literary form of Wisdom, its body, makes its soul visible and audible, gives it hands and feet and a persuasive, musical, cogent voice; which men not only must needs hear and understand, but which for its beauty and charm they will love to hear. Nor only this: for the aiding of man's deepening interpretation of his world it proceeds increasingly into that systematized, interrelated tissue of thought which is of the essence of reasoning, and so toward the goal of a unitary working philosophy. The literary vehicle, thus developed, is the gracious means by which Our Lady Wisdom proves, as she says, that even while her secret abode is with God, her delights are with the sons of men.

III

STRAIGHT WISDOM

COMMON SENSE AND COMMON VALUES

I. The Book of Proverbs briefly analyzed.
II. The unitary wisdom principle.
III. The beginning; and how conserved.
IV. What Agur the son of Jakeh had at heart.
V. The workable values of life.

III

STRAIGHT WISDOM

"WHAT is wisdom?" asks the English statesman, John Morley, in his charming address on Aphorisms; and then goes on to answer: "That sovereign word, as has often been pointed out, is used for two different things. It may stand for knowledge, learning, science, systematic reasoning; or it may mean, as Coleridge has defined it, common sense in an uncommon degree; that is to say, the unsystematic truths that come to shrewd, penetrating, and observant minds, from their own experience of life and their daily commerce with the world, and that is called the wisdom of life, or the wisdom of the world, or the wisdom of time and the ages. The Greeks," he says further, "had two words for these two kinds of wisdom: one for the wise who scaled the heights of thought and knowledge; another for those who, without logical method, technical phraseology, or any of the parade of the schools, . . . held up the mir-

ror to human nature, and took good counsel as to the ordering of character and of life." [1]

It was of this second kind of wisdom, the wisdom of broad sagacity, as we have already seen, that the Hebrew sages were students and inculcators. Their utterances on life, too, were just common sense in an uncommon degree, common sense raised, as it were, to a higher power, and pushed as far as it would go, toward the common issues of life.

The controlling question of Hebrew Wisdom reduces to a very simple thing. It is at bottom a question of sanity: it lies between being wise, a creature of large discourse looking before and after, and being a fool, with natural powers atrophied or perverted. And the final term in which that sanity, with its fruits, is expressed, is salvation; that is, health, unity, wholeness, with all manhood powers and endowments in thorough working order. Such salvation is not merely a religious affair; it is also sound sense developed to its practical height.

Now this seems, perhaps, the most natural thing in the world. The first thing that any man would interrogate, one would imagine, would be common sense for common things, if he were

[1] Morley, *Studies in Literature*, p. 57.

setting up for a sage. It is by no means clear, however, that this is the way men actually do take. Nay, something quite like the opposite seems rather to have prevailed. Disciplined common sense seems to be a thing that men learn late, just as they learn to write prose long after they have luxuriated in poetry. We can see this by looking at the Hebrew sages' neighbors on either hand. The Egyptian wise men who counselled King Pharaoh were sorcerers and enchanters; men who pried into the exceptional and marvellous, into the freaks and portents of occult nature, not into the common things of life. The wise men who came from the East to Bethlehem were astrologers and magicians, men who sought the inner meaning of things in the stars; they were looking for wisdom away off somewhere, not right here, not in the prosaic experiences of the town and the farm and the household. We will recall how Browning has portrayed this tendency to go far afield for wisdom, in his Paracelsus; who doubtless represents the awakened spirit of the New Learning just at its keenest, when, roused from the long torpor of scholasticism, it had become aware of an unexplored wealth of fact and truth before it. This awakened spirit, it would seem, was not unlike that of the young Solomon and the sages

of his time. Paracelsus, too, was sick of the stupid and vapid old erudition, and fired with the splendor of a new vision. He gathered thus into an ardent soul the movement of an age. But in order to achieve his ideal of wisdom, he thought he must leave his native haunts and wander to all the corners of the earth, must traverse seas and solitudes, ruined cities and savage lands, must delve into black arts and white, the secret and the sublime; while all the time he loathed the crowds that thronged his lecture-room, and had a contempt for common plodding human nature. The simple, healthy life of ordinary men and their home interests were too vulgar, too colorless. Yes, after all, common sense, sense for the everyday values of life, is a plant of rare and late growth. And if the Hebrew sages, with the Egyptian sorcery on the one side and the Chaldean magic on the other, were somehow guided into an all-men's thoroughfare of wisdom, available for highest and humblest alike, I dare to call it divinely ordered, providential. Perhaps it was that universal quality of it which made the Hebrew Wisdom pass into the ages as a vital element of manhood building, while Egyptian sorcery and Chaldean magic, though so much more showy and pretentious, are as dead as are those civilizations them-

selves. The literature that this wisdom of common sense called forth has in fact builded better than it knew; it is an integral strand of revelation, having the quality not of a mystic portent nor of something esoteric and remote, but of a familiar and wholesome Bible.

For the straight wisdom, then, which we are now to consider, we do not have to go far afield; it is an asset of life coined, so to say, out of the ore that lies mixed with the soil of every hillside. The early sages picked up their wisdom by interrogating the first and largest fact of experience that offered; went to work at life among an essentially religious people just as Poor Richard did among farmers and artisans, talking in terms of weather and crops and working implements and eating and drinking. We will not quarrel with Mr. Morley for calling the truths which go to make up such wisdom unsystematic; and of course we know what he means when he says that truths of this nature were presented "without logical method, technical phraseology, or any of the parade of the schools." This in fact is an essential element in the glory of Hebrew Wisdom; it was not academic. It went down to the people's heart, the people's ways, the common consciousness that expresses itself in proverbs. And each of these

proverbs contained its fitting measure of wisdom. Our modern idea is that consciousness does not reside in some one part of the body, like the brain or the pineal gland, but that each part, however small or remote, has consciousness enough to fulfil its functions. Watch, for instance the leucocytes, the white corpuscles of the blood, at their marvellous work of repairing wounds and killing foreign microbes, and they seem for all the world like a self-directed and finely organized army; with every individual aware of its duty, the same duty of repairing waste and fighting evil which on its larger scale animates the whole man. So the Hebrew mashal, in its beginning, had enough wisdom for its particular case, and so built up from individual cases to a community of wisdom. The body of Wisdom it thus developed is analogous to the consciousness of a crowd, as distinguished from the consciousness of an individual; it is a body of doctrine that takes a part of its character from the fact that every constituent element is in its place, doing its nicely adjusted work.

But if we should draw from this the conclusion that its constituent truths or underlying principles *remained* unsystematic; that there was no vitalizing logical method deep-laid beneath it, we

should need to reopen the question. In fact, here is where we must take into account that growth, that evolution, which I have mentioned as characterizing the Hebrew body of Wisdom. At its beginning, in the sunshine of King Solomon's brilliant court, it had the good fortune to be in the hands of men of letters — for so we may truly call them; — and these at once impressed upon its utterances the artistic stamp. The Proverbs of Solomon, as I have already remarked, were not rough-hewn, run-wild maxims from the mouth of the common folk. Natural and homely as they are, they bear the marks of skill, of refined shaping, of literary artistry. Now this artistry means a great deal more than juggling with words and similitudes and contrasts. Even if it begins with such loud and salient devices, it grows to more even under our eyes. For its inspiring impulse is not the workmanship but the truth. And there must go to the shaping of it a grasp of mind, a generalizing aptitude, an ability to draw many experiences into one lesson, which is in its nature logical, and which cannot long continue unsystematic. A system, a unitary concept, is growing up within it all the while, and getting ready to declare itself. So when we take up this miscellany which we call the Book of Proverbs, and inquire if there

is any one truth that it all stands for, we find that even in the course of its growth it has discovered a beginning, a *root*, as Jesus Sirach calls it, out of which a whole organism springs; and that it rounds up into a comprehensive principle which thenceforth is assumed and appealed to as an established thing, the unit of a philosophy of life.

I

To begin with, however, the Book of Proverbs makes no claim on system or unity. It is merely a collection, or rather several collections, of wise pronouncements on life, in detached maxim form. This is evident, when we come to analyze it, as we have plain data for doing, into the several sections of which it is made up. For the book, as it lies before us, does not, like our modern books, embody a planned and foreseen line of thought, or what we call a theme. Rather, it *discovers* its theme, as it were, after a great deal of material has been compiled; it discovers that its miscellany of scattered counsels have a common suffusion and direction, to which, in the end, may be given the unitary term Wisdom. This discovery, made by a later compiler and editor, is indicated in the first, which is the youngest, part of the book; and furnishes thus a clue by

which readers may now go through the collection intelligently, realizing, as the very earliest proverb readers did not, that the book means not only many things but one thing.

"The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel:" thus, at the beginning, is headed this anthology of mashal literature; a title that promises merely miscellaneous counsels on life, or rather on living; counsels to be taken as liked or needed, and pondered one at a time. It is a storehouse wherein, according to the occasion, one may get the aphorism he wants. Let us run over the collection a little.

"The only specimen of Edmund Burke," some one once said of the great English statesman, "is all he wrote." One is obliged to confess much the same of the Book of Proverbs. Its range of wise maxims is so opulent and kaleidoscopic that it is hopeless, in a sketch like this, to pick out a verse, or a few verses, from which the drift of the whole may be gathered. A better way to get at this drift, perhaps, will be to run over what surveyors call the lay-out of the book, as a basis for the focalization, if I may so call it, which the sages themselves make, as they come gradually to recognize the large significance of the whole collection.

For this purpose, in order that we may better understand how the book probably grew, let us leave the first nine chapters, as a section to be returned to later, and begin with the tenth; where, it is commonly thought, begins the oldest portion of the Book of Proverbs.

At the head of this tenth chapter stands a repeated title: "The Proverbs of Solomon;" and in the old King James Version, which undertakes to give the contents of all the chapters of Scripture, is put here the note: "From this chapter to the five and twentieth are sundry observations of morall vertues, and their contrary vices," — the only note of contents for all the indicated chapters. This note does not, however, quite accurately indicate the farther boundary of the section. Rather, these "sundry observations" extend to the sixteenth verse of the twenty-second chapter: three hundred and seventy-five proverbs in all, clearly marked off by their form from the rest of the book. They are all couplet-proverbs, antithetic or parallelistic, exhibiting thus the mashal or aphorism in its most condensed and, so to say, classic moulding.

In one rather interesting way the section answers to the order an explorer might supposably take in making a kind of voyage of spiritual dis-

covery. To the beginning of the sixteenth chapter there is a great predominance of antithesis; as if the first impulse of the sages were to quarry out of life the great eternal contrasts of good and evil, wisdom and folly, in uncompromising distinctions that need no shading down or explaining. Then from that point on there is an equally great predominance of proverbs wherein the second line enlarges upon the idea of the first, by way of repetition or elucidation or consequence; as if it were felt that truth is not always of that trenchant absolute nature which needs only strong assertion and distinction, but rather that some aspects of truth need to be left a little more flexible, more open to new involvements. I am not trying by these remarks to reduce this section of Proverbs to a plan; but as we run the collection over, the large fact emerges that as the sages, beginning thus on common ground with their readers, pushed their researches onward toward a workable philosophy, the order into which their mashals fell was on the whole the natural order of an investigation. If we are setting forth a theme, the essential steps are: —

1. Discrimination; and this leads here to the initial predominance of the antithetic mashal.

2. Parallelism, or putting a thing in interpreta-

tive terms; which leads to a next step, the synonymous or repetitionary mashal.

3. Analogy, or imaging what the thing is like; which, a refining stage, leads to the simile mashal.

4. Comparison, to literal thought what simile is to figurative; which leads to the comparative, or "Better than" style of mashal.

All these, which correspond fairly to the order of this section, are not factitious, but natural literary processes, capable, however, of refinement as the more rudimental thoughts are thought up, and the author has to go farther afield, as in later sections we see he does.

With the seventeenth verse of the twenty-second chapter begins another collection of proverbs. This we know because another form of mashal begins here to prevail. Instead of the pithy, condensed couplet we come upon stanzas of four and sometimes six lines, with a couplet only here and there intercalated. Besides this, the collection is introduced by a preface of its own, a hortatory address to the reader, in which is intimated that not Solomon, but the guild of sages are the authors of what succeeds. "Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep

them within thee, if they be established together upon thy lips. That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made them known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written unto thee excellent things of counsels and knowledge; to make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mayest carry back words of truth to them that send thee?" [1]

This preface, which is quite in the tone of Deuteronomy, seems to suggest that by the time it was written, the sages had become quite an honored and authoritative order, who not only gave but sent counsels; as a teacher sends information to parents and guardians, or as a philosopher gives wise decisions to delegations of inquirers. And the character of the collection, which extends to the twenty-second verse of the twenty-fourth chapter, corresponds not inaptly with this idea of its publication; it is a graceful and quite complete little manual of conduct, especially regarding what may be called secondary duties of life and manners, duties relating to suretyship, gluttony, unchastity, intemperance, enmities, and the like.

Immediately succeeding this section we come upon a further group of mashals, in the same

[1] Proverbs xxii, 17–21.

expanded form, a kind of postscript, headed by the words, "These also are sayings of the wise;"[1] which postscript fills out the twenty-fourth chapter. It is in this postscript that we find the song about The Field of the Slothful, already mentioned as containing the refrain used again in the Sluggard song in the later written sixth chapter.

With the twenty-fifth chapter begins a new and one of the longer collections, headed, "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out." Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah more than two hundred years after the death of Solomon; so this title testifies to the editor's belief not only that the order of court sages had survived all this time, but that there was a store of Solomonic literature which had thus long awaited publication. The collection contains something like a hundred and twenty-five proverbs, of various lengths, though the couplet predominates; reverting thus, especially toward the end, to the older Solomonic type. One marked characteristic of the early part of this collection is the tendency to group proverbs of like subjects together, forming clusters of sayings about some one comprehensive topic; thus there are clusters on The King, on The Sluggard, on

[1] Proverbs xxiv, 23.

Fools, on Social Pests. Later, however, the miscellany character regains ground. To the end of the twenty-seventh chapter a new type of mashal comes decidedly into predominance, the simile, drawing spiritual analogies from the world of sense and sight. After that the oldest form, the contrast, recrudescent like that of the simile, comes again to predominate; but with a difference from those earliest contrasts. The strain of ideas is more subtle and refined, revealing less salient truths and more remote associations of ideas; as if the writer had used up the big knock-down contrasts of wisdom and folly, and were concerned to note how, in things for the most part alike, a sharp point of antithesis may be found, just as in its counterpart, the simile, we are interested to see how things very different from each other may reveal some point wherein they are exquisitely alike. Thus this Hezekian collection, on the whole, may be regarded as the monument of a sharpened penetrative thinking, both in the sense of literary form and of the subtler values of life.

Following this Hezekian collection, and reading like a kind of appendix to the Book of Proverbs, are three shorter collections: the Words of Agur the son of Jakeh, making up the thirtieth chapter;

the Words of King Lemuel, comprised in the first nine verses of the thirty-first chapter; and finally, an acrostic poem, anonymous, twenty-two couplets long, that is, a couplet for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, on The Virtuous Woman. There is something a little odd and unusual in all of these. This last manner of writing, the acrostic, is evidently a highly artificial form of verse; but so also, in another way, is the style of Agur, which expresses itself mostly by means of the so-called numerical proverbs, such as were described in the former chapter, a kind of catalogue way of writing, like: —

> " There are three things that are never satisfied;
> Yea, four things say not, It is enough." [1]

Even in his famous prayer Agur is inclined to make things plain to the Lord by telling off numerically the things he wants. A further thing worthy of note is, that both the words of Agur and the words of King Lemuel are called oracles, or burdens, the word used distinctively of a prophet's dictum. It is hard to say why; I am inclined to think, however, that it was because when these words were published, which was undoubtedly quite late in the evolution of Wisdom, the word of the sage had come to be valued as

[1] Proverbs xxx, 15.

coördinate in real authority with the pronouncement of prophets and priests, and so to merit the same mystic name. If so, we have here a very suggestive indication of what Wisdom grew to, in national and general esteem: it was felt to be authoritative, oracular, a message from the divine.

There are things in the thought of Agur which we must bring up again; here for the present, however, we leave him, and with him the outline description of the Book of Proverbs.

Our little excursion among the landmarks of the book has seemed to reveal the notes of a kind of voyage of discovery through life, carried on for centuries, and depositing its results as they came, in successive strata. By way of summary here we can stay for only one remark. The Hebrew sage thought out his wisdom in particulars, in concrete cases; drawing it immediately from the experience, or the emergency, or the trait of character right at hand. He wrote, as Wordsworth enjoins on the poet, with his eye on the object: it was not what he had to imagine, or to speculate on, or to dig for in some out-of-the-way place, but what he saw as he sat in the market-place and the city gate. This looks like a crude, rule-of-thumb, Poor Richard way of going at life; it dons no academic

robes, has none of the parades and plaudits of a philosophy. But just so, when we think of it, a man of science approaches his department of knowledge; he puts on his apron and buries himself in his laboratory, and observes and experiments, until the useful secret is charmed from nature. The present-day scientific temper and sense for fact is illustrating to us all the while what the Hebrew sages' attitude toward life was like. It was keyed to the same scale.

And out of it all, to a greater degree than he was aware, to a result which continually suggests a Higher Wisdom working with him in the night, he was laying the foundation of a philosophy in personality, in character. Character, we may say, expressed alike in the ideas of his brain and in the tempers and passions of his soul, — that is, in full-orbed literary intensity, — was the focus in which his Wisdom united and centred. Respect for the king and for law, honor for the parent and teacher and gray head, comradeship for the thrifty and prosperous, admiration for the shrewd and subtle, tender regard for the poor and oppressed; all these wholesome enthusiasms co-existed inseparably with sarcasm for fools, scorn for scorners, contempt for sluggards, disgust for gluttons and drunkards, abhorrence for impure and

unchaste, disdain for talebearers and backbiters. And gradually these miscellaneous traits coalesced on each side into one inclusive trait: love of righteousness on the one hand, abhorrence of wickedness on the other; or not to be an echo of the church, a positive attitude toward wisdom and folly, which in the secular dialect are synonyms of these. To be industrious and open-minded and steady and temperate and tactful in speech was just in so many ways to be wise, that is, to put your soul to good use for practical and gainful ends. To be lazy and froward and gluttonous and clamorous and headstrong was to be just so many kinds of a fool. Thus, then, the lines are drawing together for a unitary structure of straight wisdom. Let us follow them.

II

For this unifying purpose we are brought back to the opening section of the book, the first nine chapters, the consideration of which was postponed. This opening section seems to be the work of the editor who brought the whole collection together, with the exception, perhaps, of the last two chapters, which, as I have noted, read like an appendix; and he has brought to his compiling a genius and enthusiasm, a creative and organ-

izing spirit, which make his section the glory of the book.

As we put these first nine chapters alongside the rest of the book, the impression grows upon us that the editor has designed it not as merely a preliminary treatise of his own, or as a kind of vestibule, but as a summary and synopsis. He is thinking over the whole Wisdom field before him, and in his fervid Hebrew way coördinating its scattered elements. And the groundwork he thus lays proves to be not merely the foundation of this Book of Proverbs; it is the foundation of the whole Wisdom literature, a basis of reference, a court of appeal, and in some ways a point of departure for the sages who go on to explore the field of Wisdom further. It lays down a nucleus principle that they all, to their latest utterances, recognize; and none of them gainsay it.

The fact, already noted, that the Hebrew Wisdom, as distinguished from law and prophecy, was eminently individual, comes here at the outset to light; making us think that these counsels of the sages were probably the chief means by which the sense of individualism came to expression in the nation. The feeling that this was an important element in its mission is indicated, not inaptly, by the fact that as soon as the Proverb book is

prefaced and launched, the first counsel given to the young man is, not to go heedlessly with the crowd, but to have his own mind and his own cherished principle of conduct.

As a whole, this section relates itself to the rest of the book by resolving its lessons along various lines into one great antithetic mashal, which rises in beauty and definition until it stands before us in the glory of personal portrayal and splendor. Beginning with the temptations that assail the young and inexperienced, temptations to the lawless escapades of boon companions, to luxurious laziness, to perversity and rash presumption, and above all to the wiles of the strange woman, it goes on through the inviting paths of instruction and genial discipline, gradually visualizing, so to say, its objects of ideal and abhorrence; until at the end, as in a vista, we see before us two beings calling the inexperienced to a kind of Choice of Hercules: Madam Folly, leering through her lattice or subtly enticing the simple to her stolen pleasures; and Our Lady Wisdom, queenly and gracious, building her house and hewing her seven pillars, calling the sons of men not like a sovereign to fear and subjection, but as Athene does Paris in Tennyson's poem, to their own manhood, to that "self-reverence, self-know-

ledge, self-control," which alone can "lead life to sovereign power." Through the charm of the poetic rhythm and imagery we are sweetly made to feel the generous condescension, the yearning love of Wisdom, as thus she shuns not, for love and manhood's sake, to enter into competition with so loathly a rival, alluring men to the large, free blessedness of life, as the other entices to secret and nameless evils, if by all means she might save men from the paths of death and shame. It is a majestic, engaging picture.

As to the make-up of the section, we must note first of all the Preface, which sets forth the grand object of the body of counsel, and above all its educative value.

"To know wisdom and instruction;
To discern the words of understanding;
To receive instruction in wise dealing,
In righteousness and justice and equity;
To give prudence to the simple,
To the young man knowledge and discretion:
That the wise man may hear, and increase in learning;
And that the man of understanding may attain unto sound counsels:
To understand a proverb, and a figure;
The words of the wise, and their dark sayings." [1]

Let us dwell a little on this masterly preface.

It begins, we note, quite simply, with knowing

[1] Proverbs i, 2–6 (American revision).

things, straight knowledge. "To know wisdom and instruction." The Hebrew sage set great store by this. The spirit that animated him was just the spirit that dwells in the scientific man of to-day: the hunger to find out the secret of life and the world for himself, by putting fact and fact, experience and experience, phenomenon and phenomenon together. His impulsion to this was doubtless the keener by reaction; it was putting in healthy motion a current of being that had been repressed. We all know the difference between knowing a thing and being told it; it is the difference between first-hand fact and shadowy theory. The Hebrew had plenty of ways of being told things; the whole atmosphere of his life was charged with law, prescription, divine sanction and threatening. The priest told him how to worship and what rules of conduct to observe; the prophet thundered at him his warnings, not in the persuasive reasonableness of counsel, but in the stern absoluteness of command. To know a thing, on the other hand, know it from an inner recognition and conviction, and not merely to take it on another's say-so: this opened a new and hitherto well-nigh starved bent of nature, which wreaked itself on a beckoning new realm; it was like the soul-hunger ascribed to Ulysses, that

"gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought." [1]

A later sage, Koheleth, has represented this hunger for knowledge almost as a disease: "I gave my heart," he says, "to explore and survey by wisdom concerning all that is wrought under the heavens; this, a sad toil, hath God given to the sons of men to toil therewith." [2]

But to this yearning to know, the Hebrew sages added a tempering and proportioning element: it was an ideal not to be filled and clogged with information, but — to be wise. What was this element, this coefficient which, being superadded to knowledge, transfigured and quickened it to wisdom?

I think that in its central essence — and in saying this I reserve another element, no less truly essential, which we must needs look at later — it was just knowledge of the right and reasonable things, the things which, laying hold on the active principles of life, make knowledge also a vigorous spiritual adjustment, and not the mere bovine recognition of the brain. An old Latin prayer, quoted by Matthew Arnold, puts it thus: "*Da mihi, Domine, scire quod sciendum*

[1] Tennyson, *Ulysses*. [2] Ecclesiastes i, 13.

est" — "Grant that the knowledge I get may be the knowledge which is worth having!'" and then he goes on to say: "The spirit of that prayer ought to rule our education. How little it does rule it, every discerning man will acknowledge. Life is short, and our faculties of attention and of recollection are limited; in education we proceed as if our life were endless, and our powers of attention and recollection inexhaustible. We have not time or strength to deal with half of the matters which are thrown upon our minds, they prove a useless load to us." [1]

We of modern days have reached the point, and not unreasonably, where we set great value on every smallest discovery of science, because no one knows what fact of nature, however remote and hidden, may be translated into some far-reaching application: a labor-saving appliance, or a specific for disease, or a banisher of filths and poisons. It is in the eventual use of it that the value of our researches culminates. This, just this, was the Hebrew sage's fundamental conviction. The knowledge he sought was such as translated directly into life; that was what made it the knowledge worth having. Accordingly, this preface names over a good many of these wisdom-

[1] Arnold, Preface to an edition of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets.*

bearing aspects of knowledge: understanding, wise dealing, righteousness, justice, equity, prudence, subtlety, discretion, — things all which are not a mere inert lading of the brain, but a weapon and working-tool in the hand, and a power in the heart to set energy and will into fruitful relation with fellow man and the world. It was a noble contribution, in those far-off days, to the educational furnishing of manhood.

The preface next goes on to specify the classes for whom the book's counsels are fitly designed, and the particular aspects of Wisdom that will suit each class. Three such are mentioned.

There is first the simple, or as we may better call them, persons of undeveloped mind; not bad nor foolish, but just crude and unripe. And what they need to get from these counsels is what the English version calls subtlety, and the American revised, prudence. In other words, into their vealy, unbaked, unploughed nature they need first of all to get some discrimination, some sharpness of distinction, some formed ideal. Like young infants, who need to learn that the moon is farther off than the candle, that bright things may burn and sweet things may poison, so in moral matters these undeveloped minds need to get a sense of relative values and primary colors of good and

evil. Their way in life must not be an accident, but so prudently ordered that untried experiences, of pleasure or pain, will not sweep them out of their orbit, but discipline and chasten them. It is to the simple that Our Lady Wisdom calls, in the eighth and ninth chapters, bidding them leave off their heedless vegetative existence and begin to think and live. It is to the simple also that the strange woman, the loathly counterfeit of Wisdom, calls, and the simpleton goes after her like an ox to the slaughter. The strange woman herself, too, is called simple,[1] a mere wisp of the crude animal nature, of which a man ought to be ashamed to be in the evil power.

Then, secondly, there is the young man, the man in the vigor and splendid morning of life; and what he may get from these counsels is knowledge and discretion, just the endowments that it is in him to seek and profit by. He has the magnificent impulse and the daring; his danger is, venturing on too little knowledge, or being headstrong and rash. And here it is that these wise counsels meet him. "I have written unto you, young men," says the aged St. John, "because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." [2]

[1] Proverbs ix, 31.

[2] 1 John ii, 14.

The sages of our book are peculiarly fond of the young man: addressing him as "My son," and pointing out with love and tender solicitude the temptations to which a young man is exposed. But though the Hebrew Wisdom is assiduous to surround the young man with warning and counsel, it does not assume him to be naturally depraved, or to be in mischief as soon as he is out of sight, or to be necessarily a sower of wild oats. That tendency of life it leaves not to the young man, as such, but to the young calf of whom we have just spoken. It takes the young man rather on the ground of his manhood and health and freedom. It seems to assume that the perilous years of life are not the young years of vision and energy and enthusiasm, when life is on the up grade, but the decaying old years of disillusion and disenchantment. The later sage, Ecclesiastes, who on this point surely has a right to speak, gives this classic expression to it: —

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,
And let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy young manhood;
And walk thou in the ways of thy heart,
And in the sight of thine eyes;
And know that for all these God will bring thee into judgment;
And remove sorrow from thy heart,
And put away evil from thy flesh;
For youth and the morn of life are vanity.

Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy young manhood,
Ere yet the evil days are come,
Or drawn nigh the years when thou shalt say,
'No pleasure in them for me.' " [1]

Thus it is that Wisdom, from early to late, values the healthy play of life and manly vigor in its favorite pupil, the young man.

Then, thirdly, this preface names the matured man of wisdom and understanding; the man who is already moving at home in the seasoned knowledge of life. And what he will get from this book is increase of wisdom, and his understanding heart will attain to wise counsels. It is with the man already wise, after all, the man who already has a fund of experience, that these counsels will take the line of least resistance and yield most result.

"Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser:
Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning," [2]

writes this same editor, a little farther on; just as in the same strain the Supreme Wisdom later says, "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." It is to him who will listen and weigh and ponder, and not to him who scorns and scoffs, that appeals can be made.

[1] Ecclesiastes xi, 9–xii, 1. [2] Proverbs ix, 9.

About fools, too, the Wisdom books have much to say; but fools are not included in this preface; and generally they are treated as a hopeless lot, whom it is not worth while to waste words upon.

> "Though thou shouldst bray a fool in a mortar,
> With a pestle along with bruised corn,
> Yet will not his foolishness depart from him," [1]

says one of the Hezekian proverbs. Wisdom, after all, is for wise men, and for those who have the making of wise men; it is well aware, as was our Lord, what natures are unappreciative of pearls.

Immediately after the preface on which we have so dwelt, this opening section and with it the whole book — nay the whole Wisdom literature — is launched, pushed out from shore, so to say, by a single couplet mashal which may be regarded as the great focal axiom of Wisdom. All grows out of this, and it is the enduring glory of the Hebrew sage to have seized upon this as his vitalizing, informing principle. Awhile ago I named, as one element which superadded to knowledge makes it wisdom, knowledge of the things which, because they quicken as well as inform, are the things supremely worth knowing. But that takes us only a little way, only as far as

[1] Proverbs xxvii, 22.

Mr. Morley's clever definition at the beginning of our chapter, which one feels to have left a nameless something, an essential ingredient, lacking. The second element, more vital than it looks, reduces to a very plain bit of common sense. If you want to know a thing, you must begin right, must begin at the beginning. In modern idiom we might call this the *temper* of Wisdom. Evident enough: what, then, is the indispensable beginning of the knowledge which is knowledge indeed? I will give the couplet as I think our sage tried to emphasize it: —

> "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
> They are fools who despise wisdom and discipline." [1]

The fear of the Lord — what is that? Let us dismiss from our mind utterly that sense of abjectness, shrinking guilt, cowardice, torpor, which we lightly associate with the word fear. The sages would surely never have seized upon it with such eager rapture of discovery, would never have so iterated its praises, if that were what it meant. What it most nearly means in the consciousness of to-day is reverence, — the sanity of the hushed, bowed, receptive heart, which would penetrate its problem not in the spirit of a proud conqueror, but of a waiting compliant disciple.

[1] Proverbs i, 7.

To know things as they are, you must sit down before them and the mysterious source and goal of them — nay, rather, kneel before them — with an open, humble, teachable spirit, a spirit which in every phenomenon senses the presence of a power, a pulsation, which spreads and grows, back and forward, around and beneath and above, until it fills the universe full. To be in such life-attitude as this, by whatever terms defined, is to have the devout beginning of knowledge which to those deep-seeing sages was so essential. "Reverence, the highest feeling that man's nature is capable of, the crown of his moral manhood, and precious, like fine gold, were it in the rudest forms," is how a modern sage, Carlyle, describes it. Nor did the Hebrew sage omit to define this by its contrary. No spiritual attitude so constantly incurs his reprobation as that of the scoffer or "froward" man; with the trait of scorn in control, or its reverence-denying cognates pride and self-conceit, Wisdom could make no beginning.

> "Surely he scorneth the scorners;
> But he giveth grace to the lowly." [1]

Such fear of the Lord was felt not only to be rich in intellectual insight and grasp, but to have a blessedness in itself. "Happy is the man that

[1] Proverbs iii, 34.

feareth alway," says one of the Hezekian proverbs. Nay, and so large and luminous did this fear of the Lord become in the sages' scheme of Wisdom that every good potency was ascribed to it. Jesus Sirach, in his opening eulogy of Wisdom, thus enlarges upon it: —

"The fear of the Lord is glory, and exultation,
And gladness, and a crown of rejoicing.
The fear of the Lord shall delight the heart,
And shall give gladness, and joy, and length of days.
Whoso feareth the Lord, it shall go well with him at the last,
And in the day of his death he shall be blessed." [1]

Nor does it remain the mere starting-point and vestibule of Wisdom; its horizon expands until it covers the whole Wisdom field, so that Wisdom becomes practically identified with piety. Even Job, after his sense of God's injustice has led him through amazing depths of a remonstrance that seems to have cast all reverence to the winds, still clings to this as the sheet-anchor: —

"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
And to shun evil is understanding." [2]

Ecclesiastes, too, who takes up the next stage, when the Wisdom sentiment was identified with that management of things which brings success, and for whom the tenderly intimate pulsation of

[1] Ecclesiasticus i, 11–13.
[2] Job xxviii, 28.

fear had largely subsided before a distant, unapproachable Deity, yet solves many problems by the fear of God, and sums up all with this precept: "The end of the matter; this heard, all is heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the sum of manhood." [1] Jesus Sirach, in his enthusiastic way, enlarges on the fear of the Lord as not only the beginning, but the fulness and the crown and the root of Wisdom.

I have dwelt on this because it is so far-reaching. It lays hold on the scientific temper of our latest days. We are all proud of what our present-day methods of gaining knowledge have done and are doing; the apparatus is so exact, the approach so deft and bold. We are amazed to see so many doors of nature fly open before the adventurous discoverer. Yet another thing also the sensitive age has marked, not without pain: the arrogance that victorious science has too often engendered; the insolent assurance with which men have rushed into the secret sanctuaries of nature and cuffed her laws about as if they were the lords and arbitrators of them. The fact that nature was so patient and gracious has not always begotten a responsive patience and graciousness on men's part; and so too often the human heart has in-

[1] Ecclesiastes xii, 13.

curred an atrophy and blight from its very wealth of achievement. Tennyson felt this in his day, and raised his voice in warning. Knowledge is good, he said, is full of power and beauty; let her work prevail: —

> "But on her forehead sits a fire;
> She sets her forward countenance
> And leaps into the future chance,
> Submitting all things to desire." [1]

And the remedy he proposes is just what these old Hebrew sages, with the instinct of true science, started with.

> "Let knowledge grow from more to more,
> But more of reverence in us dwell;
> That mind and soul, according well,
> May make one music as before,
> But vaster." [2]

Carlyle, too, holding forth the claims of the spirit in the crass rationalism of his generation, has the same remedy, the same coefficient of reverence to add to the achievements of research. "The man who cannot wonder," he says, "who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the 'Méchanique Céleste' and 'Hegel's Philosophy,' and the epitome of all Laboratories and Observatories with their results, in his single head,

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxiv.
[2] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, Prologue.

— is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye." [1]

III

Here, then, we have the beginning, the first term, of the Hebrew philosophy of personality: the fear of the Lord, of a heedful cosmic Power and Wisdom. This is his initial apparatus and adjustment; to him in his distinctive quest what the astronomer's telescope and the biologist's microscope and dissecting-knife are to them.

But the philosophers say, this is taking refuge in religion; it is forsaking the road of human and, as it were, scientific research, and falling back on an assumed supernatural revelation. So we find after all, they urge, that the sages, the humanists of Israel as Professor Cheyne calls them, with all their appearance of attacking the enigma of life independently and with mere native insight, cannot work out their problem without extraneous help; like priests and prophets they draw on their tradition of the supernatural, or what has been told them, not on what they themselves discover.

No: that is not the way I look at it. Their tenet of the value of reverence, with its presupposition of a Being to revere, is not an untested loan

[1] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book i, chap. x.

from the sanctuary; not an assumption; it is an authentic discovery. It is the answer that comes back from the universe according to what they put into it. A man who puts arrogance into his investigations gets only hardness in response. A man who brings reverence and the open heart receives answer to correspond, expressed in terms of insight and a life like that which is worshipped. Reverence yearns out into the darkness, —

> "And out of darkness [come] the hands
> That reach thro' nature moulding men." [1]

And what thus acts on their lives they do not hesitate to name God, and to identify with the God of their fathers. It is no discredit to their discoveries in life that these coincide with what priests and prophets also hold: that they have taken the priest's Mosaic conception of law and made it universal and cosmic; that they have taken the prophet's asserted direct vision and set up no word of contradiction. They can live and let live; can leave these other classes to their departments of truth while they work in their own. They have their own dialect and vocabulary, not a conventional echo of the temple or the schools of the prophets, but the transparent medium of their own undictated thoughts. If they speak religiously,

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxxiv.

it is not because the decree of the church or of orthodoxy is laid upon them, but because their own soul has come to see that the way of reverence is the way of wisdom, that the truth of life comes that way.

Now as the sages thus put reverence and its resulting insight, like question and answer, together, they were learning something very different from what the glittering Urim of the priest's breastplate or the ecstatic oracle of the seer could reveal to them. These were, after all, extraneous, extrinsic; could paralyze them with dread, perhaps, or raise an idle sense of the marvellous, but left them essentially the men they were. By this vital Wisdom, however, as it went on and grew, they were exploring their own souls, discovering progressively, like Hamlet, what a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties. And so the sign that like true Jews they required and obtained, a sign no less truly from heaven for being expressed in human terms, was a sign that they observed in life and sanity and character. Like Paracelsus with his consuming hunger for knowledge, they were discovering that

> "Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
> From outward things, whate'er you may believe.
> There is an inmost centre in us all,

> Where truth abides in fulness: . . . and to KNOW
> Rather consists in opening out a way
> Whence the imprisoned splendor may escape,
> Than in effecting entry for a light
> Supposed to be without." [1]

There it was, pulsing with life, domesticated, intrinsic; knowledge shot through with vital power.

That this sign of knowledge was recognized as from heaven, as coördinate in authority therefore with priest's law and prophet's oracle, we have one of the loftiest strains of poetic portrayal in the Bible to attest. The Praise of Wisdom in the eighth chapter means just this; it is a monument to the rapture which attends the discovery that man's intellectual powers, his insight and acumen and sagacity, are powers that ally him with God. A yoke of law has been imposed upon man by the priest; a need of repentance and contrition dinned into him by the prophet; and these inculcations are true; they are two great strands of life, of that cable by which we are bound to the Source of life. But now to know that there is a third strand, the strand of his own spontaneous powers, whereby, as he reverently follows the promptings of his own mind, he may win to the calm, wise governance of life, — this is a consciousness full of

[1] Browning, *Paracelsus*, i, 726 sqq.

rapturous awe. His imagination lays hold of the idea and makes it an objective thing. He separates it, as the creative, contriving, upbuilding attribute of God's nature, from the rest, and figures it as if it were a goddess, Our Lady Wisdom, who in her own name and initiative speaks to the sons of men.

"The Lord formed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.
I was set up from everlasting,
From the beginning, ere the earth was;
When there were no depths I was brought forth;
When there were no fountains abounding with water.
Before the hills was I brought forth;
While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields,
Nor the beginning of the dust of the world.
When he established the heavens, I was there;
When he set a circle upon the face of the deep,
When he made firm the skies above,
When the fountains of the deep became strong,
When he gave to the sea its bound,
That the waters should not transgress his commandment,
When he marked out the foundations of the earth;
Then was I by him, as a master workman;
And had delight day by day,
Sporting always before him,
Sporting in his habitable earth;
And my delight was with the sons of men." [1]

The Hebrew had no mind for cloudy abstractions. A conception did not form itself in terms

[1] Proverbs viii, 22–31.

of logic, but stood before him with the color and contour of a natural object, or the speech and traits of a living personage. Think what is here so nearly deified; imaged as sporting like a creative artist, whose inventive achievements are an abounding joy like the joy of play. It is just man's intellect,—that power of thought and wise masterfulness which has revealed itself in the sage's own person; with its free initiative, its glad circulation through earth and heaven, its opening of a common meeting-place between human and divine. For a nation whose holy God of law, in ordinary conception, is so remote and unapproachable, this is a most daring, penetrative achievement of poetic philosophy.

IV

Nor is it without its perils. In the assurance which such discoveries in nature and the world engenders men may easily go too far. They are sure to do so, indeed, if they invade their field only in the pride of achievement, and do not regulate their rash, venturesome hearts by the balance-wheel of reverence. With this initial feeling of reverence in control, it would be strange if the Hebrew consciousness, so jealous lest any other Deity share honors with his one God, should not

sooner or later take alarm. The first term of the Hebrew's philosophy, as I said in a former chapter, is God; to make Him, as other philosophies do, the last, a term to be dissected and analyzed, differentiated into god and goddess, creator and demiurge, substance and attributes, is a procedure to be watched and guarded. Vivid realization lies that way, but also risk and danger; we must not forget to put the shoes off our feet when we enter here. Our beginning of wisdom must be in superlative degree our guide and temper when we venture to project our own endowments into the court of heaven and create a speculative God.

Just here, and I think in this implication, comes in that strange section of the Book of Proverbs, one of the latest of all, entitled The Words of Agur, the son of Jakeh. The way this writer makes sudden irruption into the exultant and perhaps too self-complacent body of Wisdom utterance, reminds one of that old story of the city which had three gates; on the first of which the adventurous knight read inscribed, "Be bold," on the second yet again, "Be bold, and evermore be bold," and on the third, "Be not too bold." Agur represents himself as just a common untutored man, who has never gone into the technicalities of Wisdom, and is more thick-headed than

ordinary men; and so what is suited to him must be truths adapted to dull intellects, not the soaring transcendental speculations of the accredited sage. Yet he is sure that the caution he has to urge is an authentic oracle, a "burden." The beginning of the section, in our Bibles, is obscured by being left untranslated. We get no definite meaning out of "The man said unto Ithiel, unto Ithiel and Ucal." The words read in the original like some homely colloquial or dialect form; but they are translatable thus: "The man said (the word man means a big kind of rudimental man), 'I have wearied myself, O God, I have wearied myself, O God, and am exhausted.'" Let me give the beginning of his words in a translation made in verse form by my brother, who has kindly permitted me to use it: —

"I have mused on high themes till I 'm weary, God knows,
And used up my wits all in vain.
I might better leave these great subjects alone,
And keep to what 's homely and plain.
For I 'm duller by nature than average men;
No cleverness, surely, is mine;
And the 'Wisdom' they boast of I never have learned,
Nor the lore in which holy ones shine." [1]

Then he goes on to question whether it is so easy to fathom God's nature, and by owning that

[1] Proverbs xxx, 1–3.

such speculation is beyond his humble intellect, to intimate that in the whole matter human intellects, cobblers at best, may easily get beyond their last. To quote another stanza of the verse translation: —

"But tell me, ye wise ones who know all so well,
How you came by these wonderful things?
Who has gone up to heaven, such knowledge to share
As only Omnipotence brings?
Who grasps the wild winds, holds the sea in His cloak,
And the bounds of the earth thus confirms?
Come, tell me His name, and His son's name as well,
Since you live on such intimate terms!"[1]

"Be not too bold." Agur, the plain knight, or rather stalwart squire of Wisdom enterprise, has reached the third city gate. He is calling a halt before the Wisdom thinkers get in too deep for a reverent tread. By this attitude of Agur's one is reminded of the instinctive reticence which has kept the Jew these many centuries from pronouncing the dread Name of Jehovah lest he profane it or take it in vain. Wherever it occurs in his reading he leaves it unuttered, and pronounces instead the name Adonai, the Lord. I confess I do the same when I read Hebrew; I have come to respect, as not unwholesome, that feeling which will not bandy the sacred Name about, in idle

[1] Proverbs xxx, 4.

heedlessness. That same feeling has been potent in our most reverent and penetrative literature. Faust, the insatiable explorer of knowledge plain and occult, will not bring himself to put the supreme Object of research into the limits of human terms: —

"Who dare express Him?
And who profess Him?
Saying, I believe in Him!
Who feeling, seeing,
Deny His being,
Saying, I believe Him not!" [1]

Tennyson, too, giving voice to the uneasy and doubting spirit of his day, in similar manner leaves God unnamed: —

" That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, They, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess;" [2]

and just like Agur, he is humble enough to confess that his philosophy has limitations: —

"I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye;
Nor thro' the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun." [3]

This feeling is not all negative or sceptical; not the murmur of a torpid heart, but the yearning of a sensitive one; I dare to call it wholesome. Agur

[1] Goethe, *Faust*, Part i, sc. xvi.
[2] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxxiv. [3] *In Memoriam*, cxxiv.

represents himself, indeed, as "more brutish than any man," but this merely in ironical comparison with the superfine pretensions of academic learning; and at any rate he interposes the instinct of the plain nature to check the speculative adventures in which Wisdom might so easily swamp itself, and to bring men's regards back to the *terra firma* of practical things and the simple life.

This indeed is pretty evidently his great purpose. Everybody feels it in reading his famous prayer, which after four lines follows what I have quoted: —

"Two things have I asked of thee;
Deny me them not before I die:
Remove far from me falsehood and lies;
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me:
Lest I be full, and deny thee, saying, Who is the Lord?
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
And handle the name of my God." [1]

We have lately been reading and discussing "The Simple Life;" this is the prayer which puts into worship and aspiration the simple life. Socrates used to offer a prayer a good deal like it: "Beloved Pan, and all ye gods who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and inward man be at one. May I

[1] Proverbs xxx, 7–9.

reckon the wise to be the wealthy; and may I have such a quantity of gold as none but the temperate can carry. Anything more? That prayer, I think, is enough for me." [1]

But perhaps we have not noticed why Agur so desires truth in his life and moderation in his lot. It is in the interest of reverence; he cannot bear the thought of denying God, or "handling" His name, that is, profaning Him. In other words, he is calling his soul back to the beginning of wisdom; coming down to earth from the clouds where the sages are tending to soar; just as Browning's Abt Vogler came back from the airy musical rhapsodies and modulations which he had been so rapturously improvising to the sober C major of this life.

For the rest, Agur's actual wisdom is not quite up to the high Wisdom level. Perhaps he sets the key of the plain man's standard of knowledge a little too low; there is a note of the plebeian, the Philistine, in his words, which jars a little. His numerical maxims do not handle elemental themes; they have the flavor of *obiter dicta;* are a little off from the tempered Wisdom system, like the notions of a self-made man. It is to the disciplined, cultivated sage, after all, that we must

[1] Quoted at second hand from Hyde, *From Epicurus to Christ*, p. 159.

go for the fine and deep lessons of life; and if an Agur, looking up to him from below, holds the plea for plainness and moderation and reverence, let us accept him for what he has to give, not for his limitations. For Wisdom is still wisdom, and has its heights and hidden treasures as well as its lowly feats and levels.

V

How now shall I say the final word, to make the essential tissue and fibre of straight Wisdom palpable to us? It is all so obviously right, so fitted to man as he is, that we do not easily think how it differentiates from what the perverse heart would grasp at in lieu of it. We are half tempted, perhaps, to ask, Why need we have such elaborate apparatus of sages and schools to establish what the rack could not compel us to deny?

I was once talking over with a friend the twists of expediency that certain men of our acquaintance would adopt in order to get on, or to get the show of good work without the substance, working harder to make some crooked means avail than a straight course would ever require; and in the end he remarked, "After all, there is nothing for it but to be good." This is about what our summary reduces to. Shrewdness, keen

mother-wit, is a desirable endowment: but you cannot bank on mere shrewdness or opportunism, or pulling wires or laying pipe or hoodwinking the underlying laws of things. Conventional order and decency is a necessary thing: but you cannot develop individual manhood by going through ceremonies or ruling vogues or pious motions. Abysmal learning, knowledge of remote facts and laws, is a valuable asset of life; but your knowledge may outstrip your character and puff you up and destroy the balance of your personality. All these may answer in some emergency, and they may not; there is nothing fundamental, nothing that takes hold of the roots of things, in them. There is nothing for it, after however long your circuit of ranging for a substitute, there is nothing for it but to be good. Now we can begin to see how truly the Hebrew sage has explored and established a great law of being. He has ranged through experience and inquired in many a detail how man set here at the parting of countless ways shall find the one way; shall master the situation and manage his world. The Hebrew was concerned with the unity of personality, its great controlling current; and in the absorbingness of this concern the *kinds* and minutiæ of character, its casuistry, were of comparatively secondary in-

terest. Good and wicked, wise and foolish, these are his simple categories: other traits are ranged under these as tributary, or mere aspects. So other things, when mentioned, are conducted straight up to these. From all his excursions for light, after he has weighed and evaluated the candidacy of many a cherished expedient, he has returned to this as the Newtonian law, the cornerstone of his system: If you would be wise, to master and manage your world, be good; to be perverse and wicked, however gainful or pleasurable it seems, is inevitably to be a fool. Thus religion and worldly sagacity strike hands; work is married to worship; and success, in whatever region of piety or learning or activity, is built on one foundation.

And the success, — what of that? One may be sure no Hebrew would omit to ask, What comes of it all? What is there in it?

Well, he did not pause for the joke of our satirical humorist, "Be good and you will be lonesome;" he was too single-minded, perhaps, to think how his goodness would make him feel. But neither did he postpone the result, as many do nowadays, saying, "Be good and you will go to heaven when you die." His wisdom was founded, as we are aware, in a time when men had not

discovered this convenient salve for disappointment; he had to find success in life without the knowledge, and therefore without the motive, of immortality. And from the outset he went straight to the point, spelling success and failure in very concrete and practical terms. He sought his reward here, in the things it was his lot to work with: he measured it in wealth, health, honor, prosperity, numerous family, length of days. Be good, he said, and you are in the way to secure these. We may almost put it, Be good and you will get rich. The failure, too, to which the wicked and the fool were tending, was equally sharp in its concrete definition: they would come to want, to disease, to shame, to poverty, to desolation and desertion, to premature death. All these man might depend upon under the sun, in the sight of men, in the channels of business; all these were felt to rest on a law of being so absolute that no smallest opening was left for exceptions or accommodations. "Behold," says one of the early Solomonic proverbs, —

> "The righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
> Much more the wicked and the sinner." [1]

Here, then, in the identification of wisdom with godliness, and godliness with success, is the sages'

[1] Proverbs xi, 31.

edifice of straight Wisdom. They laid hold on that ardent surge of the Hebrew mind toward reward, toward success; they made no scruple in setting up wealth as a desirable goal, worthy of man's best powers; and it was their glory to have directed the nation's mind away from the sordid, the ignoble, the unscrupulous and depraved, and to have connected the real reward only with the noblest and sanest means and instruments. Wealth and worldly success, so obtained, take place among the sanctities and nobilities of life; are things not to be deprecated, but in all good faith to be lived and worked for. Life built on such foundations is well built.

IV

THE ATTACK BY CENTRE

THE ONSET OF SCEPTICISM

I. The fallacy of the half-truth.
II. The real centre of the attack.
III. The Accuser, and what he means.
IV. The Protagonist and his victory.
V. The summary, as related to Wisdom.

IV

THE ATTACK BY CENTRE

THE subjects on which we are now entering, The Attack by Centre and The Attack by Flank, have a truculent, belligerent sound, as if the writer had got on the scent of some of those religious controversies which, like mare's nests, modern criticism has been so prone to find in sacred history. Some biblical scholars seem to think that we cannot make clear to ourselves the inner progress of truth without connecting it with such conflicts of reasoning; on the principle, perhaps, urged by a certain disputatious Scotchman, who defended his disagreeable habit of arguing on the ground that *without* controversy great is the mystery of godliness. I hasten to assure you, however, that I am not seeking to eliminate mystery on such terms. This is not going to be the report of a doctrinal contention. Fair material for such, to be sure, might perhaps be extracted from the quarrel between friends in the Book of Job,[1] which

[1] For the detailed study of the Book of Job, the author would refer to his book, *The Epic of the Inner Life.*

we are now to consider; but this was all in the family, so to say, and not to be construed as the attack on the Wisdom system itself which our title would imply. That is something quite other, and far more momentous, as well as far more fundamental.

That some such attack, or reaction, is involved in the general attitude of the Book of Job seems to have been dimly apprehended in the fact that it has been roundly called of late years a sceptical book, and has been treated as such. A few years ago Mr. John Owen, who had taken the history of scepticism for his province, published a book entitled, "The Five Great Sceptical Dramas of History;" in which book Job is classed with the "Prometheus Vinctus" of Æschylus, Goethe's "Faust," Shakespeare's "Hamlet," and Calderon's "El Magico Prodigioso;" his ground for grouping them together seeming to be that all five had some indictment against fate or the universe. Well, Job and Prometheus occupy similar positions in the great orbit of being. Both the works that deal with them are of colossal sweep and import; both represent the soul of the creature rising up against its doom and daring to call its Creator to account. If this be scepticism, we must make the best of it; for certainly, so long as Job is

judging the hearsay and conventional God of his orthodox tradition, and before his eye sees Him, such is the patriarch's amazingly dauntless attitude. Another author, Mr. E. J. Dillon, at about the same time, classed together Job, Ecclesiastes, and Agur the son of Jakeh, as a like-minded group, in a book entitled "The Sceptics of the Old Testament." Well, we have seen, in the last chapter, what kind of a sceptic Agur was, and how in the interests of reverence he was concerned to draw Wisdom gently back from its too adventurous tendencies to the thought-sphere of the average man. A fair all-round view of Job's scepticism, and of Ecclesiastes', will, I am certain, prove equally reassuring. We need not be scared at the name if the net results are no worse than come to light in Agur's case. Only, I would insist on just this fair, all-round estimate, taking the book as it has lived and worked through the centuries, and as it is adapted to work to-day. Mr. Dillon makes out his case by a ruthless butchering of the scripture text; discarding, transposing, arbitrarily altering, nosing out corrupt readings, in a perfect orgy of what he would call higher criticism. You can do anything that way. And in the end the scepticism of the Old Testament turns out to be a thing just

about as big, and just about as reverent, as Mr. Dillon's soul. The shrinkage, to me, is too great; I cannot rest in it. I get better results by letting Job and Ecclesiastes speak their whole mind, as the record lies before me in its last edition; I prefer to commune with the large and lucid souls that a sympathetic view of their words reveals. The scepticism that comes to light in such procedure is something that we can well endure, yes, domesticate.

Undeniably, however, this Book of Job resolves itself into a veritable attack on something. Some evil or defect has come to view, whether in fact or in tendency; and if our fair fabric of Wisdom would survive and reach its ideal, things must be clarified and righted. This is but saying that men's growing thoughts must be subjected to constant test, proving their fibre and soundness; must be probed as rigorously as the world itself, of which they are part. It is to this aspect of the matter that we must now confine ourselves. I cannot in one chapter tell you all about the Book of Job; it is a universe in itself, in the way it opens our minds to the deeps of being. All I can do is to describe, and that in mere outline, its function in the evolution of Wisdom; we are to note what attack it makes on the very citadel of

the sages' stronghold, making well-established systems pass through the fire of searching assay; and how after the smoke of battle has cleared away, Wisdom, in her true ideal and power, emerges stronger, statelier than ever.

I

To begin with, however, there rises naturally to our minds, I can well imagine, the question, What is there to attack? The structure of straight Wisdom, as she has builded her house and hewn out her seven pillars, seems alike so devout and reasonable, so sane, so evidently right, so strongly based, that there seem to have been left no weak places in it. Life built consciously on such foundations is well built; a life of sound sense, open-eyed, reverent, liberal. Can we not too easily get to longing for finer bread, so to say, than can be made of wheat, and was it not drawing matters a little superfine, not to say finical, for the author of Job to assume that such a comely structure lay open to attack at all?

I will answer this natural question first by bringing up the charge that is most salient and obvious, though not the most vital, not the central attack. The first weak spot in Wisdom reveals itself in connection with the very literary tissue,

the absolute, uncompromising mashal form that the utterances of Wisdom have taken. As aphorisms they have been moulded and filed into absolute truths; and there they stand, sheer unbending assertion, needing no proof but native insight, and tolerating no objection or question. Now when we come to think of it, here is a chance not only for the universal truth and the truism, but also for the half-truth, to get in its work. To quote again from Mr. Morley's essay, already referred to: "The truism and the commonplace may be stated in a form so fresh, so pungent, and free from triviality, as to have all the force of a new discovery. Hence the need for a caution, that few maxims are to be taken without qualification. They seek after sharpness of impression by excluding one side of the matter and exaggerating another, and most aphorisms are to be read as subject to all sorts of limits, conditions, and corrections." [1]

We recall, too, Lord Bacon's remark, that "no man can suffice, nor in reason will attempt, to write aphorisms, but he that is sound and grounded." Now this is what we mean by a half-truth: a truth wherein one side is asserted with all absoluteness and vigor, while the other side, unstated, is left to the occasion, or to the general

[1] Morley, *Studies in Literature*, p. 59.

key of presupposition in which the truth moves, to supply. A familiar classic example is our Lord's precept, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;" where the whole presupposed strain of character, namely of stedfast love even to enemies, is implicitly relied upon to supply the silent half and make the truth balance up even. We know how much questioning, even as it is, the precept has caused. Now suppose men should rest in such a half-truth as if it were a whole one, or suppose they have not the right key of presupposition to unlock and supplement it, — well, we can easily see there is chance of mischief there. The half-truth has its valuable uses, more valuable as it is more important; it gains access by its very paradox, where a truism, or a fully balanced statement, would not even rouse attention; but like the "dark sayings" of which we were speaking in a former chapter, it must have the right coefficient of spiritual sympathy and insight to appeal to in the hearer, otherwise it is lamed and crippled, and may be abused. The man who receives and acts upon it, no less than the man who originated it, must needs be "sound and grounded."

Get this principle to operating on a large scale, and the results may be very portentous. To show

how it applies on a scale as large as Wisdom itself, I can make my way best, perhaps, by an illustration or two; and I may be pardoned, I trust, if the illustrations are so exaggerated as to verge on caricature.

It would seem as if any hard-headed devotee of Wisdom, any one who had the uncolored truth of things at heart, must have been brought to pause, at least momentarily, on reading in the Philistine words of Agur such a mashal as this: —

> "The eye that mocketh at his father,
> And despiseth to obey his mother,
> The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,
> And the young eagles shall eat it." [1]

Here, we say, is a grotesquely violent overstatement. In its animus, indeed, as an incitement to filial piety, it is sane and cogent; as a prediction, a threat of consequences, it is ludicrously savage and untrue. Such wild threats as this are apt to overshoot their mark; they leave the culprit unmoved and contemptuous. When I was a boy, one of my schoolmates, who lived with a not over-fond grandmother, was met as he returned from school one day with this grandmotherly greeting, "Johnny! I'll break your back if you don't bring me a pail o' water this minute!"

[1] Proverbs xxx, 17.

Small boy though he was, he could discount such a threat; his only response was, "Break my back, will ye! Break my back, will ye!" and he made exaggeratedly slow time, a great deal more than the stipulated minute, in getting the water. The boy was not unmindful, in the abstract, of parental authority; but when it came distorted with such unreal sanctions, his instinctive impulse was to withdraw into his own will and do as he pleased.

One step above these smaller instances we come upon an example that is no longer a caricature; an example so large that it fills the whole system of the sages' Wisdom full. Their body of maxims, as we have seen, had drawn to a focus and centre, had condensed itself, so to say, into one comprehensive mashal, which perhaps we may express thus: —

> "Man's wisdom is to fear God and shun evil;
> To be perverse and wicked is to be a fool."

That is an eternally true law of life; no one can get round that. To have hewn such a law out of the virgin forests of experience, and by its staunch maintenance to have given it a grip on high and lowly, is glory enough for one strain of literature. But now we come to the sanction, to the promised or threatened consequences of things. These, too, are given with absolute assurance,

leaving no room for gainsaying or exception, nor taking any pains to define terms. Here again let us try to make a mashal to express it: —

"For godliness is the sure way to success;
But wickedness leadeth to certain ruin."

This, we must confess, is a very sweeping and venturesome prophecy to make; the more so because, as we have seen, the sages had no clearly discerned immortality to help them out, but only the bounded inclosure of this world alone to verify it in. It was a mundane sequel that they had in view, not post-obituary.

"Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
Much more the wicked and the sinner." [1]

With such a prediction given, all that men have to do, to see if it is so, is to make a simple test of fact and experience. They can soon ascertain, one generation will suffice, whether they can bank surely on these consequences, so absolutely affirmed, or not. Preëminently so, by reason of the sharper definition of things. As Wisdom developed, the counsels of the sages drew to an ever concreter and more tangible centre, defining rewards and penalties in terms that could be measured and reckoned and discounted like a fund; so that to a worldly-minded business man the emolument

[1] Proverbs xi, 31.

of Wisdom was practically some aspect of wealth. That is what, in the idiom that men feel rather than analyze, it reduced to. When Job in consequence of his piety was called the greatest of the sons of the East, what was meant was that he was the richest. The marginal reading of one of the later Solomonic proverbs is: —

> "The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord
> Is riches, and honor, and life." [1]

And of course this is true, when it strikes deeply enough; but not all read the laws of being deeply.

Now in all this, with whatever warrant, the sages are committing their disciples to a colossal assumption and venture. They are virtually setting men to embarking in speculative values, investing their life, their godliness, so to say, for reward. And soon men will be coming back on them for dividends, and grumbling if these are not forthcoming; or if men manage to get the same blessing of prosperity and success in another way, they may seem to prove the whole scheme of Wisdom to be a beautiful but unpractical sentiment. Such is the dilemma into which the theory of the sages is drifting. In a word, it is betraying the weakness of the half-truth. While the principles and definition of Wisdom are un-

[1] Proverbs xxii, 4.

shakably sound, its sanctions, its promises of reward and threats of retribution, are on trial.

Such is the felt state of things when the writer of the Book of Job, his spiritual being taking alarm, pens his marvellously searching story of the patriarch of Uz. The sages' cherished structure of counsel and warning, so carefully built together out of the lore of the centuries, so staunchly defended with reasons, is beginning to betray its vulnerable points. Men have already begun to discover that it does not always go with either righteous or wicked as the wise have predicted it would. On the one hand, the righteous, instead of floating sweetly on to prosperity, are plagued every day, subject to disappointments outer and inner; and on the other hand, the wicked have so many times been observed to be as prosperous as heart could wish that a formidable array of exceptions is invading the general rule. Several of the Psalms, notably the seventeenth, the thirty-seventh, the forty-ninth, and the seventy-third, concern themselves with the puzzling anomaly, for the most part as it relates to the prosperous wicked; but they do not get far enough to call the principle itself in question. They adopt rather such an explanation as will keep the case still within the rule; as for instance,

in the thirty-seventh, in the thought that the triumph of the wicked is short-lived, and so not a real exception; and in the seventy-third, in the thought that though the wicked may become hoary in their wickedness, and even have no pangs in their death, yet God has set their feet in slippery places, and when the false, fond dream of their evil life is over, they will be utterly consumed with terrors. This explanation of things becomes violent, bitter, almost frantic, in the words of the friends of Job, as they try to make their indurated theory good against the clear-seeing, sturdily honest patriarch; nay, and they reduce it to utter absurdity in their desperate attempt to prove that he is suffering for his wickedness, and so is no exception to the rule. Their half-truth has become to them a tyranny and a snare.

As related to the afflicted righteous, the grand exception to the Wisdom dogma is embodied in the person of Job himself, whose case exhibits the anomaly in its ideally extreme type. Here, by the conditions of the problem, is a man whose life is the ripest fruitage of wisdom: a man perfect and upright, who fears God and shuns evil. You cannot conceive a completer exemplification of Wisdom; God Himself owns it. For a time, after the simple old patriarchal tradition, the reward

follows along with the life: Job has flocks and herds, sons and daughters, a great, happy household, honors and riches beyond all the sons of the East, and troops of friends. Then in one day all these are taken, and in one more day a foul and deadly disease, elephantiasis, falling upon him, proclaims to all the world what has always been regarded as the most direct retributive visitation of God. There is no doubt of it; here are the distinctive marks of divine wrath.

All this evinces the design of the writer so to portray the huge anomaly that it may be owned and resolved, once for all and through and through. It has long enough been swaying loose in the hands of self-blinded theorists; has been explained and refined away until the theory has well-nigh suffered the fate described in the Hezekian proverb:

> "The legs of the lame hang loose;
> So is a mashal in the mouth of fools;" [1]

until indeed it is in danger of hurting the whole cause of sane Wisdom, — as that other Hezekian word puts it, —

> "A thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard:
> So is a mashal in the mouth of fools." [2]

Job himself punctures the outworn theory by maintaining his integrity in the face of his friends'

[1] Proverbs xxvi, 7. [2] Proverbs xxvi, 9.

advocacy of it; until he unearths the imperviousness to fact, the sheer fatuity that is blinding them: —

> "But you — all of you — return ye! and come now!
> For I shall not find a wise man among you." [1]

For in the teeth of that absolutely held doctrine that the righteous are sure of recompense in the earth, this embodied case of Job asserts in brave, defiant way that as a matter of plain fact the righteous, — nay, the superlatively, conspicuously righteous — are just as liable to suffer affliction as the wicked. Nor this alone. The plot of the book is so ordered that this thing can be laid to no one but God. As far as Job and the friends can see, God is bestirring Himself to punish an unendurable enormity of evil. It is to them as if the powers of the universe were laying a fiery hand on a man's life and saying, Here is a plague-spot, here is the thing that deserves wrath and ruin. And yet, if you lay it to Him, as in your Wisdom theory you are bound to do, you are putting God Himself in ugly case: you are making Him out to be not a just, wise, sympathetic Judge, but a vindictive, malignant Persecutor of His own handiwork. To show all this, and somehow to set things right, is the evident design of the author of

[1] Job xvii, 10.

the book. Ah, this Book of Job ploughs deep; it unearths the hoary old half-truth which has got out of touch with life, and in its magnificent effort, by reinstating the living vital half, to make the truth a whole one, it invades the very presence-chamber of the divine with the importunate claim of human love and friendship.

The contest between Job and his friends is a battle royal between fact and theory. The friends all, and Job too, are of the sages' guild. They have come from the Wisdom universities of various lands with their theory already made and gray with age, the same theory that Job himself has hitherto held; and their whole endeavor, from beginning to end, is to maintain that the theory still holds true, and that in accordance with the rule Job is afflicted not in spite of being righteous, but because he is wicked. They will not admit that the rule can have a single exception. "Bethink thee now," says Eliphaz at the outset, —

> "who that was guiltless hath perished,
> And where have the upright been cut off?
> As I have seen, — they that plough iniquity,
> And that sow wickedness, reap the same." [1]

And the whole record of their reiterated onslaughts is simply the history of the shifts they are at to

[1] Job iv, 7, 8.

maintain their rigid theory. They begin gently and courteously, a little reluctant, it would seem, to come at close grips with fact; talk a good deal, all of them, like Calvinists before Calvin, of the innate depravity of human nature, which virtually makes out every man, by the bare fact of being mortal, impure enough, wicked enough, to deserve the utmost punishment God sees fit to inflict; recount cases of wicked men who for a time seemed rooted in prosperity and then were suddenly cut off; lay part of Job's affliction on his sons, who are no longer alive to answer for themselves; conjecture that Job has been tampering with his conscience, that he has taken occasion to sin when God was not looking, and so has got his conscience into so seared and calloused a state that when he says he is righteous he really does not know what it is to be wicked; and finally, as a last resort, they come out plumply with the assertion that Job, through his servants or somehow, has without realizing it been so cruel and heartless that this punishment is actually too good for him. Think what they make him do by sheer inadvertence. One is reminded of the whimsical idea that De Quincey perpetrated in his elaborate piece of fooling on Murder as a Fine Art. "Once begin," he says, "on this downward path, you

never know where you are to stop. Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time." Anything, in fact, to convict Job of sin, or rather to keep intact their theory, which when it sees the punishment must needs infer an equivalence in crime.

And so the friends go on, manufacturing facts and explanations, rashly overstating things and increasing in violence of assertion, until they reduce their whole case to an absurdity. If the facts will not bear them out, so much the worse for the facts. There is a story of a certain geologist, eminent for his advocacy of a brilliant theory of glacial or lacustrine action, I do not just recall what. This geologist was staying, along with a friend, at a summer hotel, above which sloped a green mountain side. As the friend was out early one morning for a walk, he observed the geologist industriously carrying small boulders and pebbles down the mountain side and depositing them at a lower level; and at breakfast asked him why he had done so. "Well," replied the geologist with a little hesitation, "the fact is, they were too high up to suit my theory." That is what the contention of Job's friends virtually means. The facts of the universe are too high up, yes, and too deep

down, to square with the Wisdom theory to which they have committed themselves; and they are trying to manipulate the facts.

Here, in passing, I must needs advert to the prevailing notion of the Book of Job; which notion, I think, obscures the book's real drift by making it out to be an elaborate debate, or theological discussion, on the question of God's providential dealings with men; more specifically, why God afflicts the righteous. We need only ask ourselves how such a postulated debate comes out, to see how unsufficing this interpretation is. We interrogate the friends: Why does God afflict the righteous? Their strenuously maintained answer is, "He does not; He afflicts the wicked, even if He has to create them wicked in order to do it." We turn to Job: "Why does God afflict the righteous?" His sturdy answer is, "I do not know; it is beyond me; I would give anything, go anywhere, to find out; I only know it is a monstrous fact." And when at last we turn reverently to interrogate the august address from the whirlwind, even then, all the answer we can deduce is, "God knows, doubtless, but He will not tell." On the score of a debate, of a system, of logic, we do not solve the problem. There is

an answer, and to this very question; but it is deeper down; it rests on more vital elements; it must be traced through a different literary form; we shall see it later. But it is not the answer of logic. We have seen where the friends' inflexible logic lands them. It is the answer of personality.

We have left Job waiting all this time, while we disposed of the friends and their theories. Returning to him now, we find that by standing stedfast on the bed-rock of fact, of things as they are, he has been disposing of them himself. They beat against him, storming and foaming, but recede baffled, like the waves at the foot of a mighty cliff. To all their assumptions and assertions of his wickedness he answers, "But I am not wicked; I have not sinned to deserve it; if any one is unrighteous it is God, not I." Amazing boldness this, so to arraign his Creator and censure His ways; but in this very judgment, as we know, he is, though not aware of it, entirely at one with what God Himself has said to the Accuser in heaven. "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a man perfect and upright, who feareth God and shunneth evil? and he still holdeth fast his integrity, though

thou didst move me against him, to destroy him causelessly." [1] To destroy him causelessly — it is as if the eternal laws of being were turned squarely around and were working in inverse order. And this mortal has discovered the fact, and is courageous enough, at risk of immediate extinction, to proclaim it.

There is far more involved here than the insight of one honest man, or the decision of a doctrinal debate. For the whole growing structure of Wisdom, too, it is endlessly far-reaching. Go back to the sages' initial quest of truth; consider how, in pursuance of the very basal assumption of that scientific impulse which has dared to launch out from the instructions of priests and the oracles of prophets, we find here acknowledged the fact that the reverent wise man, holding firmly to his sense of truth, has eyes to see things as they are. His native manhood powers, without bolstering from mystic communications, can win to the truth of things, can be an authentic vehicle of revelation. That is a great thing to know. It gives wisdom, science, honest research, a function in God's great economy of the world; it owns human nature to be not fundamentally crooked and depraved, but essentially straight-seeing and

[1] Job ii, 3.

sound. Have we ever thought what tremendous significance lies in that divine verdict at the end, given after the friends have labored to curry God's favor by defending Him through thick and thin, and after Job, with his life in his hand, has sublimely dared to call his Creator to stern account: "For ye have not spoken concerning me that which is right, as my servant Job hath." [1] It is the Divine verdict on the words of a sincere man; but more: it is the Divine ratification of the most originative freedom of Wisdom.

Returning, however, from this high consideration, let us see how Job is impressed with the existing situation of things, as he wages his stalwart battle with his friends. They pass their well-seasoned Wisdom philosophy in ordered array before him; their philosophy, which also has hitherto been his. It is a coherent, logical, self-consistent system. In fact, the most adequate summary of straight Wisdom that we have, as a body of doctrine and as a motived unity, is gathered from the utterances of these friends of Job. They are ripe scholars; they have gathered store of thought from the lore of the ancients, and meditated it into a philosophy of life. But now, as the venerable maxims are pressed upon him

[1] Job xlii, 8.

anew, the first thing that strikes Job is that they are strangely insipid; there is no more savor in them than in the white of an egg or an unsalted potato. True enough they are, no doubt, in the abstract, but truisms, so flat and stale; the ding-dong of the same old bell, — "Who knoweth not things like these?" he says, —

> "And common is the commonplace,
> And vacant chaff well meant for grain." [1]

From this it does not take long for him to realize that the old aphorisms are remote from the present case; so inapplicable, in fact, as to be virtually false, —

> "Your wise maxims [he says] are proverbs of ashes;
> Your bulwarks turn to bulwarks of clay." [2]

The friends' theory has turned against them, like the thorn going up into the hand of the drunkard; and they, in sticking so blindly to it, are so near incurring the reproach of the mashal in the mouth of fools that he soon despairs of finding a wise man among them.

What does it all mean? It means that the time has come for a new coördination of Wisdom with life. The Wisdom that they are urging upon him, logical as it is, is the kind of counsel that a scholar can sit in his library and compose by the

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, vi. [2] Job xiii, 12.

mile; it has not stirred their blood, or laid hold on the tender chords of their being.

> "I also [he says] could speak as you do,
> Were your soul in my soul's stead;
> I could compose words against you;
> And I could shake my head over you;
> I could strengthen you — with my mouth,
> And my lip-sympathy could sustain you." [1]

The deep truth of the case is, he has been, as the phrase is, "salted by fire," while they have not; has been brought inward by sharp suffering to gaze on life at first hand; and the experience has opened his eyes to the need of a new and more vital Wisdom. Things are falling into a larger relation and proportion. He knows this is so, and that in maintaining his ways to God's face he is right. Bewildered at first and groping, he comes out soon on the table-lands of vision. They urge that resentment and the sinful crook in his nature have distorted his view: no, he says, I can see as straight as ever I could. They urge that his conscience is seared and dead: no, he says, I can discern good and evil, true and false, and feel them as keenly as ever. They urge that he is cherishing the way of wickedness and scoffing, and that his burning words are bringing piety to nought:

[1] Job xvi, 4, 5.

no, he says, my whole being centres in the supreme longing to find God, and as for the counsel of the wicked, be it far from me. A monstrous wrong has been done me somehow, somewhere, —

> "Yet not for any violence in my hands;
> And my prayer too is pure." [1]

They, on the other hand, so solicitous for piety and purity, are turning heartlessly against their friend in his sorest need; and for the sake of their dogmatic system they can be blind to what is honest and godlike in him. Their theoretic Wisdom has brought them far, too far; it has hardened into an unprogressive, unmerciful system. From being a flexible inquiry into the phenomena of life, experience, conduct, as it was to start with, it has developed into an orthodoxy, with all the rigidity, all the thick-and-thin logic, all the cold-blooded intolerance of an orthodoxy. The warm throb of the heart, the free play of sympathy between man and man, is drying up into intellectualism and erudition. And therefore its doom is in sight. Wisdom must thrill to new and more humane motions of life, or she cannot survive.

The inveterate dominance of the half-truth has yielded to the attack made upon it by the author of Job. It will nevermore be held by a

[1] Job xvi, 17.

large-hearted sage that you can measure a man's piety by his prosperity, or his wickedness by his woe. The time has passed for men to infer the inner from the outer. We shall hear the next great sage, Ecclesiastes, numbering among the vanities that we must discount, "that there are righteous to whom it befalleth according to the work of the wicked, and that there are wicked to whom it befalleth according to the work of the righteous," [1] and fitting his wise, cheery counsel to the undeniable fact. No: the wisdom of life must be made up on other, more inner grounds.

II

All this, however, has belonged to the outworks. It is an attack searching and vital indeed, but not the most organic, not what I call the attack by centre. This central attack, to be sure, grows directly out of it; and has been dimly shadowed in the hard *odium theologicum*, the cold steely intellectualism, of Job's friends. It resolves itself into the answer to the question, What fruits does such Wisdom as theirs bear? "By their fruits ye shall know them," was our Lord's word; and there is no end to the depth of its application. What kind of life, what tone of principle, senti-

[1] Ecclesiastes viii, 14.

ment, character, do those wise counsels of sages, from Solomon to Hezekiah, tend to produce?

The half-truth emerges again. You coördinate piety infallibly with worldly success, and wickedness with failure, and the way of life becomes perilously clear. It reduces to the simple adaptation of means to ends. Piety, the fear of the Lord, integrity, thus becomes secondary, not supreme. It is in fact an investment put forth with a view to profit, to dividends. Satan, the spirit who came among the sons of God "from roaming to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it," was not slow to discover this. He is no fool, though his wisdom is not synonymous with piety. He it was who delivered this central attack on the motives and tendencies of Wisdom. He too, from his own mocking point of view, had considered God's favorite servant Job, so good, so happy, so wealthy; perhaps he was a little tired of hearing Aristides always called the Just. At any rate, he formed his own conclusion, and from the response it elicited, it proved to be a very searching one. "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast Thou not Thyself set a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that is his, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his property is spread out in the land. But put

forth now Thy hand, and touch all that he hath, — and see if he will not renounce Thee, to Thy face." [1] As much as to say, Job knows passing well where all those good things come from, and how they come; and as a slangster would say, he is not doing all this righteousness for fun; or as modern business, in the same spirit, is even now saying, "We are not in this enterprise, you understand, for our health." In other words, Wisdom is a business, organized and well-paying; it imposes easy work and brings handsome returns. That is what, by recognized Divine ordinance, it has come to be. But that it is not also something more inward, an essential strain of manhood, an integrity which is its own intrinsic reward and excuse for being, without reference to the pay it earns, — well, that remains to be seen. It is not fully tested yet. Its way has hitherto been too clear and calculable, perhaps, and too certainly banked upon, for its own deepest good. A Satan may believe that godliness is not an intrinsic thing; but even the Satanic sneer contains the implication that it ought to be. So Wisdom is in need of a thorough sifting, to determine what its essential motive and fibre are. If it is a commercialism, a traffic, a bargain, the world cannot

[1] Job i, 10, 11.

afford not to know it. If, on the other hand, it is a thing which is profaned by being bought or sold, the whole ideal of manhood is infinitely enlarged and enriched by knowing the truth of that.

But this latter truth does not come to light by logic; it is not a thing reasoned out and demonstrated. It must come up from the very core and abysm of personality; we must know by actual experiment whether or not a man — or rather manhood — has it in him to cling to a divine ideal if he is not paid for it at all. And if we come further to know that even with payment of affliction, even with the sanctions of Wisdom working in inverse order, man remains perfect and upright in scorn of consequence, the glory of manhood, God's creation, is all the greater. Such is the tremendous issue involved in this trial of Job. The experiment is worth making; the Lord Himself owns that; hazardous indeed, and committing Him to a temporary injustice, but containing such high possibilities if the Creator's faith in His own handiwork wins, that the risk may well be taken. So the wager is made, and Job, utterly unaware how important his conduct is in the sight of heaven and earth, is handed over to Satan for the ordeal.

For the attack on the central motive of Wisdom, as up to this time it has been held and taught,

the author of this book has employed two agencies: Satan and Job. Our inquiry about these now, we will bear in mind, deals with the literary values that inhere in them. There may or may not be an actual personal Devil; there may or may not have been an historical Job; with these questions we are not concerned. Nothing would be gained by answering them; it would be a positive obscuring of our subject to bother with them at all. Rather, as we see an author here trying to set forth in adequate terms a great crisis in the evolution of manhood, we are concerned to know what he had it in his heart to write, what pulsation of reaction and criticism, of conviction and aggressive ideal, found expression in these characters.

III

How shall we image to ourselves, in the light of to-day, this Satan of the Book of Job? There are no data here for regarding him as a fiend, whose business it is to burn and flay and devour. He does indeed handle Job with exceeding severity; not, however, so much in the spirit which delights in unmotived cruelty, as in the spirit of vivisection for scientific purposes. Nor do we find here anything like the fancied monster of mediæval times, with horns and hoofs and tail, — a gram-

inivorous devil therefore, as the naturalist Cuvier pointed out, and so not adapted to devour men at all. Rather, we find here a being who expresses some animus, some strong impulse of the author's own heart; a being whose sarcasm and severity we can almost forgive for the sake of the grand clearing of ideals that he brought about. The issue he raises is one that ought to be raised, and that needs his agency; so, as Goethe says, he "must as devil create." In other words, Satanism, in literature and in the world, has its defensible uses.

Several elements of his contribution to the situation may be brought out by a bit of comparison, showing how the Satan idea has figured in literature. The word Satan, originally *the* Satan, means literally the Accuser. To indulge in a bit of metaphysics, he may be regarded as the spirit — wherever he works, outside or in — who has a sense for the seamy and vulnerable side of things, who delights in showing up the weakness, the absurdity, the sin. We all have some share of such critical tendency, and in some it almost overbalances the sense for the soul of good in things. We set that tendency at work on things in life or thought that seem to us distorted or askew or out of proportion; it is the negative side of our impulse to balance things up and set them right. The author of this

Book of Job has an indignant sense that somehow men's ideas of Wisdom have got out of true. They have alloyed it with the wrong motive. And now, instead of reasoning out this surge of indignation into propositions, this author has embodied it in a tale, projecting the initial criticism into a personality who can urge his accusations in character. By this means we gain some advantages. We do not have to take up with unmixed Satanism; we can separate the spirit that denies from the spirit that affirms, and we can estimate his denials at their true value.

Goethe, who modelled his Mephistopheles on this Satan, has interpreted him very audaciously. He figures him as a waggish, mocking rascal; his name for him is "Schalk," rogue; and he represents him as a rather amusing, vivacious imp, whom the Lord Himself does not more than half hate. Well, Goethe has got hold of one important element. He emphasizes the nonchalance with which the Satan can contemplate an evil without being disturbed by it. There is no fanaticism of bigotry in him to warp his keen, steely view of things. It makes no difference to Satan, any more than to Mephistopheles, whether Job wins or the Lord; he loses his wager, that is all; his pulse would beat just as calmly if the whole Wis-

dom structure were in ruins. He represents, in short, what we may call the humorous element of the situation; for scholars say humor arises, intellectually, from a sense of the contrast between what is and what ought to be, the sense of incongruity. Humor takes various phases according to the nature of the man: from geniality all the way to cynicism. And we may truly say we have the humorous feeling here, though in the German portrayal it is more genial and lambent. The Hebrew humor, coexisting with a nature otherwise so intensely earnest, has to contain a strain of sarcasm; it is not the comrade sort which laughs *with* men — it laughs *at* them. It is not kindly with fools, as was Shakespeare, but contemptuous of them. We can get an idea of its spirit here in Job from what Carlyle desiderates as a means to clear away the fogs and malarias of thought: "One right peal of concrete laughter at some convicted flesh-and-blood absurdity, one burst of noble indignation at some injustice or depravity, rubbing elbows with us on this solid Earth." [1]

A touch of that satiric laughter is here, in the Satan, and its subject is the same, "a convicted flesh-and-blood absurdity." And after all, is not

[1] Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, p. 57.

a sense of humor needed sometimes to limber up things that have become rigid and austere and get them into proportion again? It is a saving virtue, this sense of humor, like the salt with which our speech of grace should be seasoned. And it is needed here in Job, to give those solemn old friends a prod, and dislodge from its tyranny over our minds that philosophy of Wisdom which has congealed into a cold-blooded, heartless dogmatism. How shall those sanctimonious, wagging gray beards be tweaked a little, and their Wisdom be thawed into warm and genial life? The way that is taken, this Satanic mockery, contains humor as well as earnest; it punctures by laughter and exposure of the absurd.

But "noble indignation," too, is not lacking here, the indignation of an outraged and discredited manhood; embodied not so much in the Satan himself, perhaps, as in the emotion which stung the author to create such an agency for his purpose. He feels that the essence of Wisdom is being outraged and vulgarized; that men have gazed at the brilliant rewards of Wisdom until they are dazed and color-blind; that the cold intellectualism of their learning has atrophied that free play of sympathy and human love which should be the very bloom and fruitage of their

knowledge. This deep indignation may be regarded as one pulsation in a kind of Satanism, the accusing spirit roused to sharp reaction. It is like what Tennyson describes of his own recovery from the deadness of materialistic doubt: —

> "If e'er when faith had fall'n asleep,
> I heard a voice 'believe no more'
> And heard an ever-breaking shore
> That tumbled in the Godless deep;
>
> "A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And like a man in wrath the heart
> Stood up and answer'd 'I have felt.'" [1]

That is it. Do not be shocked if I say, one aspect of this Satan creation looks uncommonly like the uprise of the higher manhood put into remonstrant embodiment. It is the man in wrath standing up in an indignant human heart and answering, "I have felt;" I have felt what ought to be in you a higher throb of Wisdom, and that deep pulsation urges me to protest against that sordid commercialism which is making your standard of living synonymous with driving a bargain. Life is not a thing to be bought and sold. And let us dare to say, this protest, with whatever of Satanism is in it, is salutary, uplifting; it goes far to transform this Satan into authentic fellowship

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxxiv.

with the sons of God among whom he so unceremoniously appears.

What became of the Satan after he lost his wager, the author does not tell us. Did he go forth on his travels again, searching for faults and flaws in the order of things, or did he subside into silence and acquiescence, his occupation gone? Let me venture, as a last comparison, to adduce from Robert Louis Stevenson's story of "Markheim" what may be called an up-to-date devil, showing, in a conception more audacious yet not less suggestive than that of Goethe's, what in these latest days has been made of Satanism as a tempting spirit insinuating itself into human character.

Markheim, the story goes, a spendthrift in desperate straits for money, had just murdered in his shop an old curio dealer, and was proceeding to ransack the premises for money and jewels; when suddenly a stranger, affable and quite ordinary, entered the room where he was. "Markheim stood and gazed at him [the story relates] with all his eyes. Perhaps there was a film upon his sight, but the outlines of the newcomer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candle-light of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore

a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God."

This mysterious being, quite soothing Markheim's riotous nerves by his easy comradery, suggests to him, as if it were in the way of business, crime after crime, discussing coolly the facile and hardening downward path on which he has entered, and predicting complete immunity and success in it; until Markheim, thoroughly disgusted at the vulgar foulness of it all, evil as it is at first hand with the glamour of romance all taken out, breaks forth impetuously: "My love of good is damned to barrenness; it may, and let it be! But I have still my hatred of evil; and from that, to your galling disappointment, you shall see that I can draw both energy and courage."

It is his resolve, which he carries out, to give himself up to justice. At which answer, according to Stevenson's account, occurs this astonishing thing: "The features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened and softened with a tender triumph; and, even as they brightened, faded and dislimned." [1]

Well, this is only a work of fiction; it does not

[1] Stevenson, "Markheim," *Works*, vol. vii.

prove what becomes of the tempter, perhaps; and perhaps it may strike us as verging on blasphemy. But when from this writer of smaller calibre we turn back to the Book of Job, another work of masterly fiction, we may leave this part of our subject with the reflection that the attack by centre was originated by Satan, whatever he is; and that it was an attack that ought to be made. Such remonstrances against the half-truths in which men heedlessly take refuge, and against the venal commercial ideals into which men so easily lapse, are needed still.

IV

In the second agency of the book's action, Job, the great protagonist, we have another uprise of creative ideal in the author. How shall I adequately approach this colossal creation, adapting its largeness to common eyes?

Job is wholly unaware that he, and through him the Wisdom which is highest manhood, is undergoing a crucial test; and herein lies the nobility of it. It is his native integrity of manhood, not spurred on or directed from without, but groping through utter gloom, apparently away from God, — it is this that wins. He proves by simple honesty to self and ideal, and by stedfast loyalty

to the Godlike as it were in defiance of God, that the character in him is an intrinsic thing and not the creature of reward or the slave of penalty. Nor is he alone on the defensive, barely maintaining his own. In uttermost boldness of attack, taking all the risks of immediate destruction, he turns against the very God whose arbitrary dealing he has detected, and against the friends who are the accredited representatives and type of Wisdom. And in so doing he tears away the last shred of the paralyzing old half-truth, and by setting the motive of Wisdom on an immensely higher plane, opens to it new field and honor.

Thus Job is concerned positively, as the Satan was negatively, in this same attack on the citadel of Wisdom. Only, his line of siege is one wherein the whole man fights, not merely his logic; it maintains, so to say, the position that Wisdom is something not merely to know but to be. Hence its literary embodiment in a person, with his inner life coming to assertion and action. By this means he occupies at once a table-land far above the paltry considerations of profit and loss, where he can measure life by intrinsic standards, and whence with burning, penetrative vision he can see all the heartless coldness, all the selfish hypocrisies, of his friends.

And his weapon of attack is the simplest in the world: just to say and be the truth, as his heart owns it. If he is a man perfect and upright, perfect and upright is what he maintains himself to be. No God nor man, and no theological hair-splitting, can make him palter with that plain fact. Again and again the friends urge him to confess himself a sinner: he will not do it. Incessantly they throw up his affliction against him as proof positive of guilt: no, he says, if it proves anything, it proves a monstrous wrong and injustice. Fervently they enjoin upon him to make his peace with God and be reconciled: no, he says, I have never been at war with God, there is nothing on my part to reconcile. So it goes on, with no inch yielded, no flinching from the broad, clear ground of truth. There is nothing so conspicuous in the book as Job's honesty with himself. And it is his honesty that wins.

I can stay only to give in baldest outline two or three of the salient points, or stages, in his magnificent battle; regretting all the while that so much of the account must be left untouched. Did I not say the Book of Job is a veritable universe of spiritual wealth?

The most noticeable thing, doubtless, is the way he takes his life in his hand and calls his Creator

to account. We are aware, of course, that this is the God who has always been Job's tradition and the tradition of the world: an arbitrary Being who does what He will and renders no account, and who in this unmotived affliction of Job seems to have proved Himself a tyrant and persecutor, a power like merciless nature, consuming perfect and wicked alike. In this, as we have noted, Job sees things as they are; for in the Prologue, we will remember, God owns Himself to have done a causeless wrong. Not the less, so to approach the Being who has the power the next moment to annihilate him, and who holds the swift death ready to fall, — to approach such a Being and according to the insight of a wise man to read that Being his godlike duty, is a conception which makes us hold our breath at the sheer daring of it.

"Is it beseeming to Thee [Job says] that Thou shouldst oppress,
That Thou shouldst despise the labor of Thy hands,
Whilst Thou shinest on the counsel of the wicked? . . .
Thy hands have fashioned me and finished me,
Together, all round; — yet Thou wouldst destroy me!
Remember now that Thou hast modeled me as in clay;
And wilt Thou turn me unto dust again?" [1]

Much sharper words than these, indeed, he says in arraignment of God; words that have made men in all ages, as it made his immediate friends,

[1] Job x, 3, 9.

accuse him of blasphemy. Hear what a molten stream of reproach this is: —

"Were I righteous, mine own mouth would condemn me;
Perfect were I, yet would He prove me perverse.
Perfect I *am*, — I value not my soul — I despise my life —
It is all one — therefore I say,
Perfect and wicked He consumeth alike.
If the scourge destroyeth suddenly,
He mocketh at the dismay of the innocent.
The earth is given over into the hands of the wicked;
The face of its judges He veileth; —
If it is not He, who then is it?"

Now what keeps us from judging this as a piece of vulgar denunciation and blasphemy is the fact that all this remonstrance is made *in the interest* of the Godlike. Job has an ideal, clarified by his own justice and integrity, of what the God who fashioned him ought to be; and with an agony of dismay he seems for the moment to have found that his very God, in the fear of whom his life has grown, is failing of the Godlike. So one point has been found, the point of reasonable justice and fatherly love, wherein the creature seems to have run ahead of his Creator; to have blazed out the way in life and revelation that the Creator must take if He would retain the allegiance of highest manhood. An amazing conception this, — the human, for once, higher in the scale of being than

[1] Job ix, 20–24.

the divine, just as a loving worm is higher than a loveless God. Of course we know the matter will adjust itself; the God who to a bewildered mortal gaze seems to have fallen behind in the onward movement will catch up and still be supreme in love as in power; but to see how the demand for this comes through the bewildered heart of man as it clings to its honest integrity is a most inspiring thing. Job's attack, which is just his stalwart life, has come back first on God Himself.

But in the next step Job's attack is on the friends. We recall how stale and insipid he found the well-worn maxims they plied him with, and how at last he gave over trying to find a wise man among them. Their wisdom was so cut-and-dried, so arid, so academic, that there seemed no more application to flesh-and-blood experience in it. Worse than all, they themselves seemed to have fallen away from that warm, palpitating human life whose true expression is friendship and sympathy, and to have become as hard as nails. It is well-nigh the most bitter note of his sore trial that now, in the time of his greatest need, when, if ever, a loving heart were a refuge, his friends, his friends on whom he counted so much, have failed him. And yet, after all, even this is not

the ultimate core of his indictment against them, though this goes with it. As he goes on, clearing the grounds of Wisdom and discovering point by point how it is blended and interwoven with the divine, all at once he unearths a startling fact. *They*, his philosophic friends, who have exchanged so many treasures of the mind with him heretofore, — they themselves are treacherously committed to their commercial ideal. That, in the deepest analysis, is why they have forsaken him; not because anything unloyal or unlovely has caused him to forfeit their regard, but because by sticking to their cold theory, by inferring his wickedness from his leprosy, they think they have discovered where God's favor points, and are hastening to get on His safe side and save their skins. That wounds his soul to the quick. A man that falls away from loyalty like that, as he says, is making traffic over his friend. Why, he ought to be the truer friend as the need is the sorer. Such is Job's ideal, by which he has consistently lived: he has always been a friend to the friendless and a father to the fatherless. Yet here these sages, when the stress of friendship comes, prove that the very tissue of their nature is venal and false; they are forsaking him in order to run to cover and curry favor with God. Their alle-

giance to God is not an allegiance to manhood truth; it is a bargain.

> "Hear ye now [he says] my rebuke,
> And listen to the charges of my lips.
> Will ye speak *what is wrong* for God?
> And will ye, for Him, utter deceit?
> Will ye respect His person?
> Or will ye be special pleaders for God?
> Would it be well, if He should search you out?
> Or will ye mock Him, as man mocketh man?
> He will surely convict you utterly,
> If in secret ye are respecters of persons.
> Shall not His majesty make you afraid,
> And the dread of Him fall upon you?" [1]

Thus by their mercenary ideal, which can so play fast and loose with love and truth, so cherish or dismiss friendship according to their selfish convenience, they are poisoning the very wells of manhood, are passing debased coin of Wisdom. I do not see how an attack could be more central and vital than this. If Wisdom can survive this, it will surely be to the untold enrichment and purification of Wisdom. And as for these false friends, capable though they are of saying such true things and so smooth and beautiful, it is no wonder that Job, piercing so to the centre of their motives, should preface this very passage of indictment by the words, —

[1] Job xiii, 6–11.

"But ye too, — forgers of lies are ye;
Patchers-up of nothings are ye all." [1]

From this point he breaks with them utterly. They may talk as they will; but in life and spirit they are antipathetic. For he is staking his whole life on the issue of plain honesty, in word and work, on dealing with things as they are. This is the way he follows up that charge against his friends: —

"Be silent; let me alone; and speak will I,
Let come upon me what will.
Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth,
And put my life in my hand?
Behold — He may slay me; I may not hope;
But my ways will I maintain, to His face.
Nay, that shall be to me also for salvation,
For no false one shall come into His presence." [2]

This is the man who, as typical wise man, "feared God and shunned evil." Very evidently, to fear God is not synonymous with being afraid of God. The friends are that, with a cowardice which to Job is a craven effrontery; while he in his strength of conviction has left base fear behind. No: it is to fear what the inner man feels is false and dishonest. Job is ready to die in such fear.

Then in one step more, leaving the friends as no longer worthy of his trust, Job turns to the very

[1] Job xiii, 4. [2] Job xiii, 13–16.

Hand that has so stricken him, to the God against whom a little while ago he brought so fearful an indictment. That was a hearsay God, the One whom he had called to account, — such a God as false-hearted friends could make out of their logic, and perhaps as unreal as their friendship itself. At any rate, Job's supreme longing is to find God, to know His mind, to come into His very presence with his life's record on his shoulder, presenting his righteous cause for judgment and justification. We are familiar with the old Greek phrase about appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober. Job's appeal is from the God whose dealings have laid Him open to the charge of arbitrary hardness to the God who loves, and who may be trusted and loved as a friend. To this appeal, and its detailed meanings for life, the rest of the book is devoted.

It is a pity we have not time to follow the magnificent voyage of Job's soul to the light of the restored and infinitely warmer friendship of God: through his longing regret that there is no Daysman between them, to lay his composing hand on both; then his entreaty that somehow that friendly Daysman function may be vouchsafed; then his feeling how good it were if he, so near the grave, could hear the call of God and answer

it beyond death; then his impassioned conviction that his Advocate is real, and actually exists on high; until all his dream of life and the hereafter culminates in his firm knowledge, as of a thing that must be, that his Redeemer — literally his next of kin — liveth, that He will stand survivor over Job's dust, and that in consequence of His favor Job shall surely see God with unclouded eyes, a stranger no more. Such is the faith of the man perfect and upright, who through all the midnight of baffling experience steadily maintained his way before God, believing that to be, by however mysterious course, his only salvation.

And that simple faith was rewarded, even in the sight of men. Not with restored property and household twice over, nor with regained health and honor, nor with length of days. These were not his reward. These were but the incidental refutation of his friends and of the world's effete notions, in the only language they could understand. No: Job's reward came while he was still a leper on his ash-heap; when, after the august Presence of the whirlwind had passed His works in review before him, showing that to all His creatures He is a God loving and very careful, and that in the sunshine of that love and care every creature lives its glad free life with wisdom enough

endowing to fulfil its function in joy, Job realized that the God whom he had so supremely sought was no hearsay God but a living Presence, —

> "I had heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear,
> But now mine eye seeth Thee." [1]

Nothing but what we live for supremely can be our reward of living. Job lived in this principle; and when at last the light of life came, though the pains of deadly disease and the ravages of loss were still upon him, he was humble and satisfied. So the old half-truth found its counterpart and came round whole, after all; but on a deeper and infinitely larger scale.

V

What summarizing word, now, shall give in the light of to-day, the relation of this Attack by Centre to the growing ideal of Wisdom?

The attack, momentous as it is, has not been an attack on Wisdom at all. Wisdom stands stedfast, with its stately house and its seven pillars, stronger and comelier than ever. There is nothing to modify or shade down from that fervid monologue of Our Lady Wisdom, in the eighth of Proverbs. Job himself, the great protagonist of our conflict, virtually acknowledges as much. After his

[1] Job xlii, 5.

conviction of his friends and of his conventional God, he proceeds to pay unchanged homage to Wisdom, in that masterly ode, the twenty-eighth chapter; wherein, after searching in vain for it, in the mine where treasure is and in the wilderness where man is not, in the sea and in the tracts of sky, nay, and in the vague rumors of Abaddon and Death, he traces it inward to the secret thoughts of God, and thence back again, as reverence and departure from evil, to its human home, its nesting-place in the heart of man: —

> "God understandeth the way thereto,
> And He knoweth its place.
> For He looketh to the ends of the earth;
> Under the whole heaven He seeth.
> When He gave the wind its weight,
> And meted out the waters in a measure, —
> When He gave a law to the rain,
> And a way to the flash of the thunder, —
> Then did He see, and declare it;
> He established it, yea, He searched it out.
> And unto man He said,
> 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,
> And to shun evil is understanding.'" [1]

The same truth this, that we have heard before, and shall hear again, as long as men see clear and true.

No: it was no attack on Wisdom which Satan-

[1] Job xxviii, 23–28.

ism and human integrity combined to make; it was a righteous and truth-loyal attack on the too selfish, too venal motive which had grown like an excrescence on men's theories of Wisdom. There was something in the better nature of the Jew, avid of success though he was, which rose in wrath and shame against making the supreme issues of life commercial; and this greatest of sages, the author of the Book of Job, speaks out for his nation and its ideals, clearing the murky air.

So the attack resolves itself into the answer to a very plain question. You look for reward: suppose the reward fails, what then? Shall you stop being wise — stop fearing God and shunning evil? Suppose you find the forces of the universe working in inverse order, — what then? Shall *you* begin to work in inverse order, being false and foolish, in order to secure the fool's reward? No: there is a deeper strain in you bidding you be true; for somehow, though we may have to wait for it, there is a right order; and truth is truth, and Wisdom is wisdom, in scorn of consequence.

At the beginning we were ready to ask in doubt, What is there to attack? We were thinking, perhaps, of little flaws to pick and petty repairs to make, in the comely palace of Our Lady Wisdom,

with its courts and seven pillars. And now as we look back over our way, we find that there was everything to attack. So it is, as men's thoughts grow. We must not allow our views of truth to stagnate; we must keep things moving, must stir them up and turn them over, until every part of our system is exposed to the light and aerated into good red blood. For the case of Job's friends shows us that we cannot be wise with our brain alone; Wisdom is not an academic thing; we must descend into the arena of action and suffering and be wise with our life. Else we may get our philosophy crooked and mischievous, working in distorted order.

> "Hold thou the good: define it well:
> For fear divine Philosophy
> Should push beyond her mark, and be
> Procuress to the Lords of Hell." [1]

Job fought his fight by the sublimely simple way of holding the good, as a true man saw it, against world and universe. Yes: the Book of Job is a sceptical book after all, calling long entrenched notions to sharp account and stewardship; but its scepticism is worth more than orthodoxy.

[1] Tennyson. *In Memoriam*, liii.

V

THE ATTACK BY FLANK

THE WORLD OF WORK AND WAGE

I. The new problem of Wisdom.
II. The tone of the Book of Ecclesiastes.
III. The question of what is rewarding.
IV. The negative element of the book.
V. The positive and constructive strain.
VI. The addition to the structure of Wisdom.

V

THE ATTACK BY FLANK

IF we will attend duly to the implication of things, we shall find, I think, that at the outset of each of these books, Job and Ecclesiastes, there is presented a situation which in a concrete case suggests, we may almost say necessitates, the specific problem of the book. To get at the most productive interpretation, we have but to take this situation in its plain elements, and follow out the line of the most natural inquiry it raises, which is in fact the line of least resistance. In each book the case of Wisdom, as it were at the latest date, is embodied in a personage; who, by the fact of possessing in ideal degree some of the Wisdom elements, marks a kind of outlook-point from which we can see and reckon the elements yet lacking or yet to be cleared up.

What the person of Job thus embodies and suggests, we have seen. There, by the conditions of the problem, was portrayed a man who incorporated in his own life the highest ideal that man had shaped of Wisdom; of Wisdom when, in its prime, so to say, and as it were under sim-

ple patriarchal conditions, it was the first fruits of reverence and identified with sincere piety. He was a man perfect and upright, one who feared God and shunned evil. Evidently in this personage the problem suggested was not, as in Proverbs, the question what it is to be wise. That element of the matter is eliminated from the inquiry; to be wise, ideally wise, is to be like Job. But the question naturally rises — and it is not malice that prompts it but penetrative common sense — what is he so wise, that is, so reverently pious, for? For profit, for the reward he gets, Satan answers; and the standards of Wisdom culture hitherto prevailing cannot gainsay him. Satan is uncovering the lurking-place of motive, the heart of the intrinsic man; to reveal whether he is essentially false, or whether it is in him to be true. From this too natural answer of the Accuser's, the next question, which merely projects it into form for a test case, follows. Suppose the reward fails, suppose the forces of the universe, with which the sanctions of Wisdom have come to be identified, begin to work in inverse order, what then? It is a question, we see, which does not lend itself to answer by speculative dogma; the answer must be put in terms of personal life. And the staunch faithfulness of Job to his manhood

integrity, maintained in loyal devotedness yet in stern defiance, is the tremendous embodied answer. A sublime new revelation this, of what it is in human nature, the lay human nature with its native fibre and insight, to know and to be; man can know and choose a Godlike ideal, and be true to it, though the sanctions of the universe seem against him.

I

Here in the Book of Ecclesiastes,[1] which we now take up, we see likewise the situation of things embodied in a person. Calling himself Koheleth (which name is the Hebrew original of the Greek name Ecclesiastes, and of the English term The Preacher), this person evidently wishes to be taken as King Solomon, in order that we may associate with him Solomon's ideal endowments of wealth and wisdom. It is a situation in which, as we naturally surmise, both wealth and wisdom, and especially the former, in ideal balance and fruition, are to play their part in life; not now as in Job, in a primitive environment remote from men, but in the world of affairs, where men struggle and labor. The scene is more complex and

[1] For the grounded and detailed exposition of the Book of Ecclesiastes, the author would refer to his book, *Words of Koheleth.*

involved, more like our modern civilization; and Wisdom, though at heart it may still be sincere piety, has to take the form of masterfulness, management, practical adjustment of life to affairs. And in brief the situation is this: Here, by the conditions of our problem, is a man kingly, prosperous, famous for his wisdom and his wealth alike, the very type and ideal of the Wisdom ages; the one historic man who stands for supreme success; and he has obtained all the *reward* of Wisdom that heart could wish. This situation, as we see, is just the opposite of that of Job; who failed of the wise man's reward, nay who suffered the extreme of the wicked man's punishment, yet retained his righteous integrity. Perhaps, when we come to think of it, it is as perilous, as full of hazard, for a man to get all he wants, as it is for him to lose or fail.

At any rate, this new situation projects itself into a new problem of life; not so massive and central as Job's, but more chill and paralyzing; a problem pressed upon us no less by success than by failure, and even more by luxury than by labor. It does not rise up like Satan's question to smite our motives in the face, but comes round insidiously, after all our schemes of life seem in balanced order, with work and wage each in place.

For this reason it is that I call it the Attack by Flank. And the problem, raised by Koheleth-Solomon himself, is this: Here am I, with a reward of life ideally great, with all that Wisdom can earn or fortune bestow: and now that I have it, what have I? What does it amount to? What new possessions does it add to my life, my soul, my real self? Why, just as soon as I get it, it is vanity, vapor. Whatever I get, wealth, wages, stores, even store of knowledge, all is vanity; and the seeking after it, pursued never so hopefully, pursued in whatever direction, is but a chase after wind. What is that thing reward, when we have got it?

It is a puzzling question, any answer to which must lie very deep. That is one reason why the book itself is so puzzling. It ploughs deep; it weighs and finds wanting many of the things that men most value; it forces the soul to a point where the utmost resources of Wisdom are taxed to furnish light. Nay, it reaches one *impasse* of life, its impact on the hereafter, where the very insight of its era, the most penetrative that the Old Testament can afford, is fairly baffled. But its problem is one which, sooner or later, all life must meet, and which it puts a man into the very soul of Wisdom to have solved. Nor is the solution so hard as a perverse heart would make it. It is very sim-

ple, and adapted to plain living; it comes, indeed, to man in all his labor which he laboreth under the sun.

This, then, is the new problem which, insinuating its disparagement of the values on which men set their heart, amounts to a new attack, a new plea of scepticism; only, instead of assailing the foundation of the central citadel, it comes round by flank and forces the garrison already in possession to show its passport. What is that thing reward, after all?

II

That we may get keyed up, so to say, for the solution of this problem, I must needs speak here of the tone, the sentiment, the prevailing mood, of this Book of Ecclesiastes, as it has wrought its effect upon us and upon readers in general. For while by one key of mood it is the saddest book in the world, by another and I think the prevailing one, it is one of the bravest and cheeriest.

For us of these later days the book lies under a grave handicap. The sentiment that has idly gathered round it has consigned it to the category of gloom and world-weariness and pessimism and despair. Men have taken it as a kind of "Sorrows of Werther" among the Scripture books, and

responded to it, mostly by hearsay, as they did to that sickish youthful work of Goethe's, which in its day set the pace of a generation's sentiment. We know how prone men are, like sheep following a bell-wether, to run and jump as some wave of fashion tells them to do. Nay, sometimes, as Carlyle puts it, quoting from Richter: "If you hold a stick before the Wether, so that he, by necessity, leaps in passing you, and then withdraw your stick, the Flock will nevertheless all leap as he did; and the thousandth sheep shall be found impetuously vaulting over air, as the first did over an otherwise impassable barrier." [1]

One is tempted to think much the same thing has befallen the world's reception of this Book of Ecclesiastes. Its opening exclamation, Vanity of vanities, of course by its very abruptness and sweepingness arrested immediate attention; that was its design. Thenceforth that word vanity was taken as the label of the book. It suggested a felicitous name for one of the most powerful episodes of the Pilgrim's Progress, the episode of Vanity Fair; and Bunyan made good wholesome use of the idea. This name, Vanity Fair, was in turn utilized by Thackeray for the title of his leading novel; and he too did not misuse the idea;

[1] Carlyle: *Essay on Boswell's Johnson.*

though, writing at a time when the age was just beginning to recover from its "Sorrows of Werther" sentimentalism, he left a little too much of the weakness of that sentiment with them. So the half-real, half-spurious feeling of the vanity of things, especially of social and fashionable things, has spread, like a kind of spiritual measles, over the shallow world, making a vogue of the melancholy Jacques mood; and tracing back through this name vanity to Ecclesiastes, has made that sturdy sage, to his great hurt, its confederate. To his great hurt, I say; because the judgment which would whittle down his message to a sickly sigh of vanity, or which indeed would make the sadness of his book overbalance the cheer, is a very superficial judgment. It has gone off on an idle catch-word, and measured the book by that; leaving the book itself mostly unread and wholly unproportioned. I speak with some feeling; it seems such a pity that for the sake of a half-insincere sentiment, so strong and prevailing a fibre of the book should have missed its due.

This, however, is only one side of the matter, coming as it does merely from those lachrymose people who would count the book sad because it is weak. There is another class, not sufficiently respected among us, for whom the book is sad

because it is strong; because it probes to the underworld of being where are the sad, searching elements of manhood. The sceptics of various name, with whom the book has always been a favorite, are ahead of us in realizing that by calling in question this matter of reward, or wages, it seeks to draw men's regard away from the vain and futile, to the real values of life. This is undeniably saddening to begin with, and imparts a sombre tone to the whole discussion. You cannot make such a clean sweep of things so fondly worked for and valued, and carry it off in a light-hearted, nonchalant mood. But there is something bracing in such sadness as this, and underneath it flows a current of solemn joy.

And the book's sweep is a clean one; there is no doubt of that. At the very opening word Ecclesiastes pronounces sentence of vanity on all things under the sun. And then, to make the case more hopeless still, he denies men an outlook toward a world beyond this life, where presumably wrongs might be righted and vanity exchanged for solid substance. These are the two main counts in the book's indictment of life. The crookedness of the world, the enigmas of fate, the shocks of chance, the blows of death, all resolve themselves eventually into these two — vanity here, lack of

outlook yonder. And from one point of view these are absolute; they fill the world full; absolute, and portrayed so just on purpose to leave no exception, no loophole of escape. Ecclesiastes minces no words, pares down or shades off no terms, in setting them forth. It is as if he had in mind some speculative venture from which he would warn men; some South Sea Bubble, or some project for extracting gold from sea-water. And such a design, in very truth, is what he has. There are some cherished schemes of life, he virtually says, from which you cannot be dissuaded too absolutely. You must be startled and kicked away from them if necessary; they are barren, vain, there is no outlook that way. And what if these futile things should turn out to be the very things that men most dream of and work for, — the cherished rewards, wages, profits, luxuries of life? Well, if it is so, unpalatable as the truth is, we ought to know it. And it is part of Ecclesiastes' task, the ungracious, growling, old-fogy part, to make men know and own just this truth.

So as his austere beginning he concludes all under vanity. Yet all is told in a robust, hearty, ringing tone, which ill beseems one whose spirit is crushed by it, or who would leave a world welter-ing in vanity and agnosticism. Here is where we

ought to take account of what lies beyond the outset: the positive temper, the onward sweep, the progress of the book. If it is designed to make gloom and pessimism prevail, then it has chosen a strangely inconsistent medium to set that sentiment forth. There is in the style a buoyancy of opinion, a wholesome steadiness of recovery, an emergence from every knotty puzzle to what is more lucid and more deeply based, which betokens that the counsels of the book are designed to pass outward not in gloom, but in strength and cheer.

And this points to what is the distinctive contribution of Ecclesiastes to the world's asset of truth. The vanity with which it begins is not its point of approach, but its point of departure. The book exists not to prove to the world that everything is vanity; but *because* everything is vanity, to counsel men what to do about it and what manner of men to be. It is a surge onward from vanity to solid substance. From the things that are futile and disappointing it leads the soul gently and surely to elements of life that it may depend on and rejoice in permanently.

The literary form itself answers to this trend of counsel. In a former chapter I remarked that as the Wisdom literature developed, a thread of con-

tinuity worked in, to bind the detached maxims or mashals into a unity and progress; and that this binding thread of Ecclesiastes was inductive. That is, the author assembles the facts of life, sombre or reassuring, not merely to make an anthology, as the sages did in Proverbs, nor to make them tell a story or prove an argument, as in Job; but to weigh them, balance them up, and draw a practical conclusion. The author assumes a historic personality, it is true, but not as the hero of a tale; he tells of the kingly enterprises he instituted, and the inner results he got from them, speaking as a sage who was discovering wisdom; and then, dropping the kingly rôle, goes on to recount other facts which any one can see, and the wise conclusions to which, as inductive data, they point. It is like going into the turbid arena of affairs and working out the problem of life gradually, before his readers' eyes. So whenever vanity is alleged, whether in the large range of the beginning or as connected with some smaller detail of experience, it is alleged simply as a futility, a barren hope, which is to be evaluated and left behind, in order that the soul may advance to something solider, turn inward to something deeper, something not subject to vanity. Thus the book which began in the minor key

modulates in ever increasing proportion into the robuster major chords. How can you deny such a strain to a course of counsel which from all the devious and tortuous mazes of baffling experience through which it must pass emerges to such a culmination as this: "Go thou, eat thy bread with gladness, and drink with merry heart thy wine; for already hath God accepted thy works. At every season let thy garments be white, and oil upon thy head not be lacking. Prove life with a woman whom thou lovest all the days of thy vapor-life which He hath given thee under the sun, — all the days of thy vanity. For this is thy portion in life, and in thy labor which thou laborest under the sun. All that thy hand findeth to do, do thou with thy might; for there is no work, nor cleverness, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." [1]

As much as to say, what if the grave *were* the burial of those gifts which you so value? Make up life not with reference to the grave, and not minding the impending death at all. "For who is he," Ecclesiastes has just said, "that is bound up with all the living? — to him there is hope; for the living dog is better than the dead lion." [2]

[1] Ecclesiastes ix, 7–10.
[2] Ecclesiastes, ix, 4.

No: make up life rather out of the genial materials of your daily lot, out of the work which God has apportioned you, and which by the very mastery and success proves God's acceptance of it. Here are all the materials of wisdom and knowledge and joy, right at your doors; all you need to tone up and invigorate your soul, to be had for the gathering.

I have thus had to turn aside a little and trace in the large the trend and tone of the book, in order at the outset to clear away the haze which an idle sentiment has drawn round it on the one hand, and on the other the too unrelieved gloom which a one-sided study has infused into it. We must judge a structure from the beauty and strength it exhibits when complete, and not while the scaffolding still obscures the design, or the chips and fragments of labor clutter up the floors and passage-ways. We must judge Ecclesiastes not by the dust and vanity that dim the eyes and choke the throat as he stirs up the evils of a crooked world, but rather by the noble ideal of living which he has extricated from it all and set forth as the finished outcome of his exploration and survey of things. This it is which will stand paramount as his distinctive contribution to Wisdom.

III

Returning now to the point at which the attack by flank joined issue: What is that thing reward, of which men make such account? Truly, this seems like an invidious cavil to raise. Reward? Why, do we not all work for wages; are not wages a legitimate correlate of work; is not the very thing we make, the house we build, or the fortune we amass, or the knowledge we gather, — is not this the wage of our work, as natural an answer to it as the clay to the seal? And now to raise the chilling question, "What is all this worth?" — is it not almost like a plea of sour grapes, a cover for our disappointment or an excuse for shirking and malingering, like Falstaff's question of honor, asked because he was too cowardly to risk his life in battle? "What is honor? a word. What is in that word honor? what is that honor? air. A trim reckoning! Who hath it? he that died o' Wednesday. Doth he feel it? no. Doth he hear it? no. 'T is insensible, then. Yea, to the dead. But will it not live with the living? no. Why? detraction will not suffer it. Therefore I'll none of it. Honor is a mere scutcheon: and so ends my catechism."[1]

[1] Shakespeare, *First Henry IV*, Act v, sc. i.

Is it not, then, a kind of underhand thing, a stealing round by flank, to insinuate upon Wisdom such a Falstaffian objection as this?

To all which the answer involved in this flank encounter is: This is not an attack on wages, like the superficial onslaughts on wealth and capital that demagogues are making nowadays, as if the success that life affords were to be accounted an unholy thing. Nor is it a question of striking work because wages, or higher wages, are not forthcoming. Let us remember the conditions with which we started: man is assumed to have all the wages that heart can wish, all that a Solomon, with ideal endowments of wealth and wisdom, can surround himself with. Yes: man has wages, ought to have wages, ought to see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. He is made, it would surely seem, for an ultimate goal of satisfaction, where the fruits of his life, adequate and fitting, shall be gathered.

But what wages? what reward shall satisfy? what coin shall be paid? What *can* pay a man, endowed with that wisdom which is a pulsation of the divine, working out the life which such wisdom vitalizes, — what *can* pay a man for living? Nay, when we put it this way, we see at once that the whole idea of work and wages, an idea

naturally established under a régime of moral law, must needs pass sooner or later under searching revision. Some sage whose common sense has retained its rigorous sanity, who can see straight and see both sides of a thing, some wise man like Ecclesiastes will surely rise to analyze that dominant dispensation of service and reward, and tell the world how far its value extends and where its limitations begin. This is his large service, salutary but in a degree thankless, to his age, to all ages, to the growing evolution of Wisdom. And the answer which his book holds in solution is this: Nothing can pay a man for living but life itself. Life is an ultimate fact. It cannot be bartered for anything else; it will accept no equivalent. Anything else put in the balance with life, as wages, as gain, as achievement; anything whatever externalized from life and hoped-in for a stay or appeasement or gratification of the soul, inevitably turns out to be vanity, vapor, a futile, elusive breath of air. Any possible reward of life, to be rewarding at all, must be a reward not in coin but in kind, and must pay itself in as you go along. Life must be its own reward and blessedness or nothing. Now we can see why Ecclesiastes' cry of vanity is so trenchant and absolute, and why he refuses to open up to men the too convenient refuge of the

future. The problem of life must be worked out without reference to external environment and without reference to time. It does no good to postpone; the issue cannot be postponed, for that would be letting it go. I heard once of a quaint old catechism in which were this question and answer: "What is the penalty of meanness?" The answer was, "More meanness." We can frame nothing but a similar question and answer here. What is the reward of life? More life.

This is the master-idea that we need to grasp firmly and keep in control, on our journey through the undeniably complex tissue of Ecclesiastes' thought. It must be kept in mind to nerve and support us, like the order of a great commander on the field of battle, or the deep enthusiasm of the cause that has inspired us. For the idea swallows itself up in the smoke and dust of a baffling world and social chaos and an effete dispensation; and while men are in the turmoil of battle the bounds of their cause seem lost, they look up to heaven and see only the smoke. We must carry this idea with us, that Ecclesiastes, who for his time and régime is the commander and expositor of Wisdom, is moved to set forth the supreme values of life, and make them good for all time against the lower and temporary

values with which men deceive and befog themselves. He speaks as one who *was* a king; but he is not speaking in behalf of any ideal or privilege that kings can monopolize, or that the wealthy and educated classes can arrogate to themselves. Rather, his sympathy is with man as man, in all his labor; and the ideal he seeks in Wisdom is to lay hold on every promising resource, every candidate for the claim of reward, until he shall see "what is the good thing for the sons of men to do under the heavens, all the days of their life." And so as he looks on the one side at wealth and honor and refinement and luxury, it is to show how empty it all is by itself; and on the other side at the welter of labor and hardship and injustice, it is to show how genuine a spring of wisdom and knowledge and joy may still exist in the unbought personality to make the most untoward circumstances endurable. Yet he has no quarrel either with royalty or with labor. Like Marcus Aurelius he can say,—

"Even in a palace life may be led well;"

but none the less he shuns not to enter

"the stifling den
Of common life, where crowded up pell-mell,
Our freedom for a little bread we sell;" [1]

[1] Matthew Arnold's poem, *Worldly Peace.*

and for high and lowly alike he is supremely concerned to rescue the living truth that

"The aids to nobler life are all within."

I think we may say this is no unworthy theme for a scripture book or a philosophy.

IV

It has seemed necessary, in describing a book so puzzling as this, to spend unusual time in clearing away obscuring fogs and getting the master-idea, the illuminating clue. And now that we enter the closer view of the book itself, all that we need to do is to point out the more salient landmarks and note how consistently they slope upward to a mountain height of sound sense and wisdom.

His opening cry, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," is, as I have said, a point of departure, not a point of approach. It concedes the vanity of the world and life, in order to go on and tell men what to do about it, what practical conclusion to draw. And he peals it out so abruptly and roundly not because he is in despair, but because at the outset he will startle men in the place where their vain hopes are centred and make them think. And as soon as he has uttered this exclamation,

just as Satan did before him in the Book of Job, he opens the whole profound issue in a question: "What profit hath man in all his labor, which he laboreth under the sun?"

This book, then, it would seem, is going to deal with the profits of life, what they are and what they are worth — if indeed there are any; it is going to sift that matter of reward to the bottom. What profit? the Hebrew word, *yithrōn*, is much used throughout the book, and evidently plays an important part in its body of counsel. The word means literally surplusage, residuum. What is there left over, what net proceeds, when the laborer has done his work, when he goes home and takes his wages? It is virtually a grand summing up of life, as it were a posting and balancing of the books; and all this in the terms which are most nearly the idiom of every life, the terms of labor, of activity, of earned wages. Every man has a work to do, whether it is paid for or not, whether done in joy or in sour rebellion; it is the lot to which God and his own nature have appointed him, and it is the vehicle of his talents, his bent, his skill, his range of interests. He is not here to play, or to vegetate, or to adjust existence to an ideal of ease or luxury, whether now or hereafter; he is here to work, to put himself by

the side of God among the creative forces. This Book of Ecclesiastes, seeking the reward of life, steers straight for the field of wholesome labor; it is beyond other scriptures a workingman's book. And the solution it contains is expressed in the idiom of the workingman, who though he may be obscure and ignored, is yet the real strength and sinew of society.

But the profit, the surplusage — what is there in all this labor which looks beyond the labor, to compensate for the hardship and the toil? The question as first asked has an austere ring; plaintive, perhaps, if asked in bewilderment, or if asked in prescient wisdom, truculent and defiant, as if it would challenge any answer but negative. And indeed, from the background on which it is first projected, the cosmic background of nature and history, there comes back nothing but negative suggestion. What surplusage, what thing left over, is revealed anywhere in the on-goings of the world? Generations come and go, the winds circle back and forth, suns rise and set and come panting back to the place where they rose, as if the day's round had tired them out. "All things," the sage says, "are labor-weary; no man can describe it." And what comes of it? It is like a huge wheel of being, which turns on its vast

axis, and returns on itself, but never gets forward. There is nothing new under the sun. The coming generation passes under the yoke of the same old law of being, beginning again the same old task as did its predecessor; and its individual work in the sum of things is speedily forgotten, nor does it add to the pile anything that can be noted or named. You recall that gentle, kindly old lama, in Kipling's novel of "Kim," whose soul was so dizzied and depressed by the great wheel of life to which he felt himself bound, and who made lifelong pilgrimage and search to get free from it. At its outset, as we note, our book enters that same vein of Buddhistic imagination; figuring life as a restless rotation, returning evermore on itself, with no residuum of achievement or increased vital store to show for its revolution, and no clearly ascertainable progress. This, we may say, is the first report of the Hebrew imagination, when once it transcends national bounds and looks upon its treadmill régime of law from a cosmic point of view. We shall note the reason of this feeling later. Meanwhile, this observed fact, more truly than the crookedness of men or the enigmas of fate, is the real cause of the book's abysmal sadness; and it is the background on which Ecclesiastes

projects his counsel of life. It is as if he had chosen the sternest thinkable situation of things, so that no element of the problem should escape to baffle us more. If cheer can be gathered from such a situation as this, it is a cheer all-potent, it is a victory indeed.

From this point onward be betakes himself to the details of the world's life; setting himself "to explore and survey by wisdom concerning all that is wrought under the heavens." He gives first an account of his own kingly enterprises, in building palaces and making parks and accumulating wealth and servants and pleasures and luxuries; laboring evidently to describe the result when man, ideally situated and endowed, surrounds himself with all the remunerations of life, all the fruits of skill and taste and labor that heart can desire. It is our problem of reward reduced to the induction of fact. We know what the outcome is. From every quest, every enterprise, every achievement, he returns with the sickening sense of vanity and a chase after wind. There is no profit, no net proceed, to add to his soul's assets under the sun. It is not in the power of houses and lands, of wealth and luxury, of anything external to the man, to be a real reward. It may give pleasure in the getting, or at least the

work and skill laid out on it may; but as soon as it is externalized, as soon as it exists outside the man to be looked upon, it turns to disillusion and vanity. What, in the end, is that thing reward?

Wherever he turns, it is always just so. He enters the world of times and seasons, wherein every deed has its occasion and every man's work its opportunity. He imposes no restriction, for even good or wicked work; gives man free hand to test the case by using every occasion as he will; enters the high places where injustice and wickedness are rife, and merely notes that these are having their day, and that the time for judgment on them will come too. It is only a picture in a little more detail of the same virtual rotation that he saw in the world of space; things coming round to the same point in their orbit, with no gathered result, and nothing but vanity to add to the strivings of man. Then into the confused world of human activities he enters; into the world of oppressions, and business rivalries, and unsocial isolation of hearts, and that selfish strife for wealth whose ultimate logic is to separate every man from his fellow and make him dwell alone. Then into that mysterious world wherein fate has taken our measure, and decreed

that when a man gets all he wants, yet is his soul not filled; he is still as lean as ever, and hungry for something that is more than meat. Then, even when he brings his wisdom to consider it all and interpret, even the divine endowment of intellect is not always to be counted on as unerring. A strange perversity has crept in. God made men upright, indeed, but they have sought out many inventions, many evasions, and accommodations, and tortuosities of application, by which they have bent the laws of wisdom to their own evil will.

Thus the huge fact of vanity seems — or say rather it is designedly so portrayed as — to fill the world full, and leave no room for anything but perpetual disillusion. Then further, looming up inevitable in the path before every man, is another fact, stern, chilling, inexplicable, the fact of death. One event befalleth them all. However wise the man, and however rich in the rewards of wisdom, he must lie down in the same grave with the fool, leaving all his gains to a dolt or a spendthrift; nay, must mix his dust with that of the beast, for one breath have they both. There is nothing to show, as between man and beast, which spirit goes upward toward heaven and which downward to earth. Here, then, the ver-

dict of universal vanity seems to reach its utmost, its hopeless extreme. "This is an evil," he says, "in all that is wrought under the sun, that there is one event to all; and this too, that the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that — to the dead."[1] Here, however you judge it, is where the matter ends. Ecclesiastes does not, like Job, call God's justice to account. He takes matters as they are, as the unprejudiced testimony of the eyes reveals them to us. Such, then, is the verdict rolled up relentlessly on life and the world, by one who set out honestly to test the sufficingness of all that earthly existence can give. What is that thing reward, after all? The evil is not that man cannot get what he wants; he *can* get what he bends heart and energy to get; whatever it is, he can get it. The evil unspeakable would be to be satisfied when he gets it, for that would be, to be an earth-bound fool. But from this evil he is rescued by what seems to earthly view a strange limitation; what is rather a providential maladjustment. If he will let his largeness of heart speak, or if, as Ecclesiastes puts it, his heart still rules by wisdom, it is the divine decreed law of his being that the

[1] Ecclesiastes ix, 3.

reward should turn out to be no reward at all. All the labor of man is for his mouth, yet is the soul not filled.

But here the question might be raised, Are not the labor and the toil and the disappointment and the vanity, — are not these the sternly allotted earthly part, and does not the reward come in the life hereafter? We are so familiar with this adjustment of things, that doubtless the compensating element of another world, a life beyond the grave, has risen before us ere this as the solution of the problem. But right here it is that Ecclesiastes, coming into sharp conflict with his age, supplies what though at first thought the most sceptical is in reality the sanest, sturdiest plea of his book. All the vigor of his reaction, indeed, rises ultimately from this conflict with the tendencies and sentiments of his time. Though, to be sure, the first sound of it is like a cold, harsh agnosticism. You do not know, he says, what there is beyond the grave; no one can bring man to see what shall be after him. And because you do not know, you cannot make a motive of it, cannot build life upon it. Time and again he talks in this strain, and with an animus, a sharpness, a heat, which betrays the fact that speculation on future things, and wordy vaticinations

concerning them, are in the air, and by their volubility and essential shallowness are irritating him.

And this doubtless was the state of things when he wrote. We know how little the Old Testament says about immortality. We have noticed, too, how the Wisdom literature thus far has made up its scheme of rewards and retributions with reference merely to this present life, and has made no promises for the beyond. The doctrine of immortality came into the Hebrew mind late. From the tone of this book of Ecclesiastes, we judge that it was just finding its way into popular thought and discussion when the book was written, about two hundred years before Christ. The doctrine came in, it is thought, by the way of the Greek philosophy; and would seem to have been a very fascinating idea, a kind of talk-making fad, like theosophy or the wonders of radium, especially with the higher classes, the pace-setters of public opinion. Our book, opening as it does the whole question of reward, and reducing reward as such to vanity, is a kind of veto, a kind of old-fashioned and old-fogy makeweight against the new doctrine. Ecclesiastes does not say it is not true; he simply maintains that it is not proved, not evident. Man cannot see what shall be hereafter beyond the

grave, any more than he can see what shall be after him on the earth. Hence it is folly to bank upon it, or make up life with reference to it. There is the great peril to manhood, a peril to which on many another account man is already too prone. The influence of such a speculative doctrine, as speculative, is to postpone life, to flee from the thing that you cannot get or enjoy here to some other place and some other time, in which the conditions are fancied to be more favorable. If you do that, you are still set on the external reward; the same old desire of getting some kind of cash equivalent, something in environment and not in you, that you can sell your life for, still possesses you. You have only transferred the realization of it to another region, to the supposed Elysian existence on which your soul enters after death. All this, in Ecclesiastes' view, is enervating, emasculating; it is giving up life itself, with its splendid possibilities, for a dream of ease or rest, or satisfying wages somewhere else. Hence his impassioned cry of vanity, directed against everything that man cherishes external to himself, whether it be in space or time, in the earth or in the sky, in the body or out of it. You cannot forecast the future, he says, and even if you could, it is not in the

power of a change of worlds or a change in time to change your essential nature. In a word, the regards of man must be brought in from that vague other world, with its speculative satisfactions, to which he is so allured to flee, just as they must be brought in from any mere environment whatsoever, and centred at home, in the citadel and kingdom of his own soul, where the work of life must be done and its problems solved. Thus the assertion of vanity and the negation of future outlook are but two sides of one massive plea for the intrinsic man.

V

Nor is the book all reaction and remonstrance. It builds as well as pulls down. But it begins its upbuilding at the abiding foundation. From the repressive warning we have described he sets out to create a real, positive tissue of life, an intrinsic manhood and character that shall be a source of joy and satisfaction, and thus its own reward. This he does by the plain every-day means peculiar to the Wisdom literature. Approaching concrete experiences, he endeavors step by step, by bringing out the strong and honest and permanent element of each one, as it comes along, to evolve an authentic answer to that ever-control-

ling question, What is that thing reward? What surplusage, residuum, profit, advantage (the word *yithrōn* has many shades of meaning) may inhere in this or that deed or trial, task or achievement; what that remains in the soul, a permanent asset of manhood?

So these things come out between the lines. As, for instance, he looks back on those vast enterprises of building and design which as king he instituted, even while to his dismay he has discovered that they did not appease his soul as finished works, yet from the *doing* of them he has derived a genuine joy. The glad activity of planning and executing, the soul that he put into it, was the real portion that remained with him from all his labor. Then, too, there was the wisdom that he laid out on it; that stayed by him, he could live in that, could build on that; as superior to folly, he said, as light to darkness. It is interesting thus to follow all his little applications of wisdom to the details of life, as he shows what in the dictates of common sense or in the interests of soul-building is the better alternative or ensures a result of practical advantage. Equally striking it is also to note how he finds here and there in manhood nature, in the commonest places, a mysterious pulsation, or larger

tendency, which seems to adapt him to a state of being more spacious than this; and how he takes note of the hunger for what is more than meat, or the wisdom beyond the demand of this work-and-wages life, this tomb-bounded existence.

I cannot stay, of course, to trace all these. They sum together in two profoundly vital elements which make the book add to the true wealth of life far more than it has seemed to take away. For in the stead of vanity and vapor they provide solid substance, and a vital energy in the place of that dreamy speculation which would lose itself in unexplored ranges of being.

As he is thinking how the toil of men and their times work together, here, for the first element, is the way he makes the fact reach out to larger things. "Everything," he says, "hath He made beautiful in its time; also He hath put *eternity* in their heart; — yet not so that man findeth out the work which God hath wrought, from the beginning, and to the end."[1] This, as we see, is the vital, energizing fact to set over against our ignorance of the future. And it is all-sufficient; it is better than knowledge. The power of the future, the pulsation of an eternal energy, of the permanent, of that which transcends this

[1] Ecclesiastes ii, 11.

earthly life, is already within us, moulding our work and ideals to a larger model, impelling us to emulate the work of Him whose deed is forever. This it does, though it denies the power of seeing onward to the end or back to the beginning; it is not an occultism, or a vaticination, but a hidden vitality. In the consciousness of such an endowment as this we can well be content to waive speculation on the mystery or the bliss or the splendor of a post-mortem existence; our immortality has become, as it were, a present possession.

This is one of the two vital elements. The other is a homelier, more prosaic thing; but when we think how universally our life is centred in it, and how undone we are without it, we cannot deny it the royal place that Ecclesiastes accords it. I mean our work; our life's distinctive work, with the skill, the design, the joy, the potentialities, the healthful creativeness of it. It is marvellous how slow the students of this book have been to discover this cardinal feature of it; this cheery gospel of work, promulgated so long before Carlyle, by an old Hebrew sage, who saw that the work in which we can rejoice, or at least the rejoicing in it, is the true reward of living. "Blessed is the man that has found his work;

let him seek no other blessedness," the modern sage says; but long before him the ancient sage had drawn out of the turmoils and occasions of life this conclusion: "Wherefore I saw that there is nothing better than that man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion. For who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?"[1]

Nor is this given as a last resort, as the only thing man can make of a bad job. It is in itself a blessedness to sweeten not only the ills but the good fortunes of life, adding the saving ingredient, the coefficient without which riches and boundless plenty were vain. "Behold," he says again, "what I have seen! good that is comely: to eat and to drink and to see good in all his labor which he laboreth under the sun, all the days of his life which God hath given him; for this is his portion, yea, every man to whom God hath given riches and goods, and hath enabled him to eat thereof, and to obtain his portion, and to rejoice in his labor,—THIS is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life, when God respondeth to him in joy of heart."[2]

This is in very different tone from that strain

[1] Ecclesiastes iii, 22.

[2] Ecclesiastes v, 18–20.

of disillusion in which the book began; and yet from the beginning he has through all bafflements steered straight for this; he has found the solid and substantial thing for the sake of which he concluded all under vanity. And we can see how he has done it. He has gently forced the soul inward upon itself, to the place where the intrinsic man is, where are his aptitudes and his joys, where his ideals germinate, and where eating and drinking are the symbol not of sensualism, but of healthy, happy, care-free well-being. Get the soul of man at home within, rejoicing in his congenial work, responding loyally to the pulsation of eternity in the heart, and he need ask no odds of outside things, for reward or wages; he has his reward, his ultimate good, measured in the coin of the life itself. Would you sell your life for anything but this?

Of other features of this fascinating book — how in face of the puzzles and untowardness of being the kindly sage is laboring all the while to upbuild a soul of manhood which shall stand foursquare to all the winds that blow; how he sets man before God in reverent, loyal silence, and before rulers in reticent, temperate, tactful speech; how he sets man before mysterious fate and chance, and even before his law of righteous-

ness in self-respecting wisdom and soul-mastery; how he sets man before the pageant of life in the energy and faith of young manhood, while his powers are at their best and rising upward, "ere yet the evil days are come," the days of senility and decrepitude, — of all these I must not speak further. It is only the merest sketch that I have given, but it must suffice. And perhaps from it we may be able to see how the temper and presupposition of things are shifted from the commercial to the spiritual; to see also by what consistent steps of advance he reaches the height where he can leave the soul all ready for the judgment, fearing God and keeping his commandments, just as the sages did before him, and finding in such reverence and obedience the sum of manhood. Ecclesiastes ends, like Job, with an appeal for judgment. But while in Job the verdict was given by God Himself, in the later book, though God is in heaven and we on earth, we are somehow brought consciously nearer the point where we can see as God sees, and pronounce judgment on ourselves; where with confidence we may await the verdict on "every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."[1]

[1] Ecclesiastes xii, 14.

VI

To what stage and outlook-point now, as regards our growing body of Wisdom, have we arrived? Was this insidious flank attack needed, and has the structure of Wisdom, surviving, taken on any new element of beauty and strength, to repair the weak places and round out what was lacking?

As we pass from the Book of Job, with its large and lucid Wisdom issue, to this intricate Book of Ecclesiastes, it is like going from the presence-chamber of a king to the confusion and turmoil of a battlefield. We carry the king's commission with us, and we know that he watches over the conflict from afar; but for a time all outlook and direction seem hidden, as we are swallowed up in smoke and earthly vapors. To deal with God as Job did, finding His will and out of trouble recovering sense of His loving kindness, is a comparatively plain issue. To deal with men, who though created upright have sought out many inventions, is a task full of perplexity and uncertainty. Hence the feeling of puzzlement that comes upon us as we pass from Job to Ecclesiastes. It seems at first as if the progress of the manhood ideal had retrograded, as

if the bounds of righteousness were lost, as if the God who in Job was so near had become remote, "an absentee God sitting outside His universe and seeing it go;" and as if to be wise were no longer to be simply pious, but to be able to manage things, or to bear the burden of a perverse world, whether with strict distinguishing of goodness and wickedness or not. Ecclesiastes, in fact, seems to throw all questions open; and in his quest for that "good thing for the sons of men to do under the heavens all the days of their life," he freely lays hold on folly as well as Wisdom, as if the foolishness of folly were still a thing to be proved. Nay, he goes so far as to say, "Be not too righteous, and play not the sage to excess; wherefore," he ironically asks, "wilt thou undo thyself?"[1] As if one could be, according to a modern epigram, so good as to be good for nothing. Does it not look as if the tone and standard of things were lowered, — as if high Wisdom itself had a set-back?

Well, let us see what ideals have thus far been evolved. In each of the books we have studied Wisdom has shown itself in a distinctive aspect; as if it were the will of history to show her features one by one, as men were grown to appro-

[1] Ecclesiastes vii, 16.

priate them. In Proverbs, Wisdom, the contrast to folly, was almost synonymous with sanity; she was making her cause good against fatuity and madness, and determining from what wholesome beginning and temper, as related to God and human nature, to set out on her exploration of the deeps of being. In Job, Wisdom had come to be about synonymous with integrity; this we saw in the patriarch's utter truth with himself and God, and in his rejection of every false thing, as felt in the unfeeling dogmas of philosophy, and as unearthed in the treachery of his friends. What new aspect shall come to light here in Ecclesiastes?

As we have seen, God had set a hedge round Job on every side; and though for a little that hedge was broken, while Job proved that he was true not for the hedge but for the truth, yet it closed again, and Job rounded out a long and prosperous life in the felt presence and care of God. In other words, here was Wisdom drawing support from constant dependence on its beginning and source. Might it not presumably have become in course of time a kind of bolstered-up Wisdom, always leaning consciously on a stronger Arm; and might not thus its vitality have come to seem a matter of course, a kind of law of na-

ture which could be used without the keen sense of its spiritual worth and blessedness? And if it had so evolved, what would have become of the manhood initiative? There is a favorite idea of Browning's, that God's way with man is to withdraw Himself and stand aside a little, in order that man may have a chance to put forth his own originativeness, and feel out his way, and grow as it were of his own motion.

"You know what I mean: God's all, man's naught:
But also, God, whose pleasure brought
Man into being, stands away
As it were a handbreadth off, to give
Room for the newly-made to live,
And look at him from a place apart,
And use his gifts of brain and heart,
Given, indeed, but to keep forever.
Who speaks of man, then, must not sever
Man's very elements from man,
Saying, 'But all is God's' — whose plan
Was to create man and then leave him
Able, his own word saith, to grieve him,
But able to glorify him too,
As a mere machine could never do,
That prayed or praised, all unaware
Of its fitness for aught but praise and prayer,
Made perfect as a thing of course." [1]

I think some such idea as this is in control, in the Wisdom that is set before man in Ecclesiastes. Man is given, so to say, an individual chance,

[1] Browning, *Christmas Eve*, v.

that he may prove what is in him as he works his way among the confusions and untowardness of the world. He is to prove how empty are earth's rewards, unless they are such as strike in and energize the soul. In a word, here in Ecclesiastes Wisdom has become virtually a synonym of *character:* it is the native manhood discovering its true fibre and having its joy therein, as an intrinsic self-directive thing, as a work God-appointed and God-accepted, as a pulsation of eternity in the heart; — even though it be separated a little from the felt supports of religion or the overmastering pressure of divine law. So as we see, Wisdom is not thereby retrograding or becoming irreverent. Rather, it is the more truly entering upon its own, as a second nature of manhood, with the loyalty to its secret source so ingrained that this can bear to be unthought of, like breathing or the process of digestion. The perfection of Wisdom, after all, its culmination and ripened maturity, is character; wherein man at last has naturalized all its divine elements and made them thoroughly his own.

At the beginning it may have seemed a dubious venture when man in his native endowment of insight set out to explore his manhood, without priest and prophet at hand to authenticate his way

by directions from heaven. To many a tenderly religious mind of the present day the same doubt has risen; and such trust in the seemingly undictated intellect has been deprecated as hazardous, or reproached as impious; has been called rationalism and infidelity, and stigmatized as cutting loose from God. Its attitude toward miracles and the supernatural, which was the attitude of common sense, has been taken as the antipathy of a depraved heart. In this way a whole class of investigators, the scientific, has been brought under opprobrium, and reckoned outside the religious camp; while on their part they, in too hasty retaliation, have fettered their deeper insight by assuming that religious reverence was neither beginning nor end of their wisdom. There has been grievous fault on both sides. But here in our history of Wisdom we have reached the point where we can readjust the whole contention; can look back and see what ideal part such scientific inquirers and their inquiries may play in the hospitable scripture economy. And what we see gives us much reassurance. For not only have these sages, beginning with the reverent fear of God and clinging to it throughout in loyal insight, marched shoulder to shoulder with priests and prophets; they have acted too

as a tempering factor, a kind of court of manhood appeal, bringing back even orthodoxy from its too hide-bound notions, and by their centre and flank attacks compelling men's ideals to be sane, consistent, liberal. It is an honorable record; a record wherein we see the ideals that had become hardened or murky falling into sweet reasonableness and lucidity. Thus common sense in an uncommon degree has justified its mission in the sum of things, and so far from being a movement away from God has proved itself a movement toward free spirituality, toward the assured strength of self-directive character.

In its voyage of interpretation and discovery Wisdom must needs confront the two great focal problems of being with which its freedom is involved: God and immortality. Neither of these can be ignored in any penetrative philosophy of life. How Job in his central attack dealt with the problem of God, calling the conventional idea into court and demanding that a God who would retain his allegiance should be Godlike, we have seen. It was the sublimest, most trenchant note of all Wisdom, a tremendous uprise of the over-soul in man. And now in turn, here in this Book of Ecclesiastes Wisdom is brought to confront the problem of immortality.

The doctrine is coming into the popular heart, very Greek and æsthetic and self-pleasing; so much the more alluring that the Jewish nation to whom it comes has had such a hard road to traverse in the present world. A pleasing outlet it offers, without breaking any law or involving any impiety. Nor does Ecclesiastes himself set his face against the fact of immortality, if it be a fact. He, as much as any one, would accept it if the way to it were clear. Not the fact, nor the cheer it kindles, but the motive it engenders, the kind of life that this speculative immortality produces, is what he calls into court. So here it is the part of Wisdom to make a flank attack; to come round under the self-pleasing sentiment and say we cannot know; and further, to demolish the whole notion of making up life with reference to an equivalent of something else, an extrinsic reward. This it does just as honestly as Job issued his attack, and from a precisely analogous motive. Job arraigned his hearsay God in the interest of Godlikeness; Wisdom here, likewise, repudiates this shallow immortality in the interest of the true immortality, of eternity in the heart. The thing that Greek philosophy is urging on the age is exotic; it does not root back to the old Hebrew principles of

righteousness, has not the fibre of character, no real grip on the deeps of being. That is why it must be frowned upon. We must wait until a better candidate offers, an immortality that means more than self-indulgent luxury; must in fact grow a larger manhood, a manhood worthy of eternal perpetuation, before eternal life swims into the field of vision. Meanwhile, all that can be said is, we cannot know. Our foresight has reached its limit. In thus stopping short at agnosticism, Wisdom, as we now see, was soundly in the line of a true evolution; for we have the testimony of history that life and immortality were not fully defined in Ecclesiastes' day, but were first brought to clear light in a later era, and by an agency far more vital than speculation.

This agnosticism, then, is the verdict of a twilight period, an unfinal dispensation; pronounced when as yet men's insight could not see in nature and human life anything beyond its range of moral and cosmic law, anything more than a self-returning, stolidly revolving wheel of being; pronounced when as yet the human heart felt no surging exuberance of life, life as it were liberated to excess, toward other reaches of progress, toward ranges of being where the hunger for reward was too crude to enter. What other ver-

dict could a pre-christian Wisdom give? The onward and outward surge, the pulsation of free spiritual values, was not yet; all that could yet be felt was eternity in the heart working dimly and hidden toward some state of life unknown. So all that could be done was to wait, and rigidly to test present values, and guide life by the friendly stars until the day break and the shadows flee away. I confess there is to me a note of the heroic in the way that Wisdom, in the interest of something more solid and grounded, thus puts away a selfish and shallow immortality; like a Cromwell putting away the crown, like a Christ turning back from the glory of transfiguration and starting down the mountain slope toward Calvary. Let us bow our heads at such sublime self-abnegation.

And meanwhile the common-sense road that Wisdom stakes out is the road of unbought, unbuyable character. That thing reward, as wages, as profit accruing to labor or business, is vanity and a chase after wind; but the life itself, the ultimate fact, vitalizing and ennobling all the energies, all the joys and endowments of the soul, is its own reward, its own immortality, its own heaven. We have here but the homely old lesson, raised to a higher power, of the things that are

inalienably ours, as woven with the strings of our being, set over against the things that however craved and valued never can be intrinsic. It recalls Shakespeare's words:—

"Who steals my purse steals trash; 't is something, nothing;
'T was mine, 't is his, and has been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And makes me poor indeed." [1]

The purse may go, but there is still the good name, better, as our sage says, than goodly nard, and the character it connotes; and there is still the character, though the name itself be filched away. And there is work to do, the God-given portion of man, a work cheered by wisdom and knowledge and joy; inspiring and beautifying, weaving the materials of every-day experience into the texture of a self-rewarding life. And as for the vision, the immortality which in her sense of twilight Wisdom so resolutely put away, it "is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." To wait for the real vision for the sake of which we have rejected the false, and meanwhile to grow a manhood worthy to receive it: this,

[1] Shakespeare, *Othello*, Act iii, sc. iii.

I believe, sums up the high lesson that emerges from the puzzling complexity of the book we have studied to-day.

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!" [1]

[1] O. W. Holmes, *The Chambered Nautilus.*

VI

THE MAKING OF MANY BOOKS

PAUSE FOR STUDY AND DISSEMINATION

I. Significance of literature as Apocryphal.
II. The question of relative inspiration.
III. The value of marking time.
IV. The two apocryphal Wisdom books described.
V. What has been contributed to Wisdom.

VI

THE MAKING OF MANY BOOKS

AND for what is more than these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." [1] This singular warning occurs at the close of the Book of Ecclesiastes; a singular warning, I say, and very suggestive, when we consider who gives it, and at what point of relation it comes in the large development of Wisdom literature. The sage Ecclesiastes has been in vigorous reaction against certain tendencies of his age; his whole book has the tone of setting wrong ideals right, and out of a confused murmur and movement of discussion getting at the real inwardness of things. "Though in a multitude of dreams and vanities and words many," he says, "yet fear thou God." [2] That this dreamy hum of words around him was the eager exploitation of the new idea of immortality, as it came to act on the popular mind, is a matter that must not detain us here; the point is, that Ecclesiastes' felt business was to condense this

[1] Ecclesiastes xii, 12. [2] Ecclesiastes v, 7.

vague ferment of words into principle and substance, once for all. And now as he gets to the end of his book, he feels that this part of his work is done to stay. There will yet be books written, books galore; such an intense and fervid movement of thought cannot help so agitating the air as to precipitate a perfect snowstorm of written leaves; but the main thing, the nucleating and defining truth, has been said, and all that can be said after it is as it were the threshing of old straw, or, if this is too disparaging a simile, at best the following out of the central current into the eddies and sluiceways of detailed application.

This is no necessary reproach on the "many books" that flow on without end. It recognizes, in fact, the event that has to follow every great epoch-making achievement of fundamental thought. The abstruse gravitation theories of Newton's "Principia," the massive involvements of Darwin's "Origin of Species," have to be broken up and simplified, illustrated and so to say diluted, through many a humble monograph and text-book, before they can reach that grade of information which, as Macaulay says, "every schoolboy knows." We do not get our notions of evolution directly from Darwin, nor our notions

of gravitation directly from Newton; we get them from some of the many obscure books that have labored to give them currency; or perhaps still more from the allusions and phrases and turns of expression that are in the air, and that without these great discoverers could not have existed at all. A great deal of knowledge is by such means infused into our daily speech; which thus becomes the most potent record and vehicle of the great ideas by which men live.

In speaking of this wholesale making of books, Ecclesiastes does not warn his readers against studying them. If they want to lay out labor and weariness upon them, they may do so. He merely warns against taking these books as original sources, as the fountain-head of truth. It implies, indeed, that he thought no small things of his own contribution to fundamental truth; but in this, I think we are in position to say, he was quite justified. He seemed to be strongly aware, by some inner standard of his, that his assessment of things had reached rock-bottom. But what his warning implies most deeply of all is, that we should have a sense of the proportion and relative importance of things; should be aware what are the big, elemental, original principles, and what are merely the secondary and

derived. There is a road from each to each, a circulation of power both venous and arterial; but to lay hold first of the central heart of Wisdom, and know which way the current of your thinking flows, is a thing so important that when Wisdom has reached a certain matured and rounded stage men must needs have the boundaries marked for them, and "for what is more than these be admonished."

I

Two notable samples, remaining to us, of these "many books" we are to take up for consideration in the present chapter. They are found in what is called the Apocrypha; — literally the hidden books.

Why this assemblage of books was originally so called is not clearly known; and indeed two opposite reasons may be adduced. An esoteric sect may hide its peculiar doctrines from the public, in order not to make its precious secrets common. Or, the authorized judges and censors of books may hide them from the public because they contain supposedly something dangerous or heretical. Neither of these reasons for being apocryphal is suggested by the internal evidence of the books we are to consider: the Wisdom

of Jesus Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, and the Wisdom of Solomon. They are just as innocuous, just as frank and open, as any scripture book; and to say that they are genuine books of Hebrew Wisdom is to include the implication that they are seeking the fullest possible currency, not the doubtful honor of cryptic or esoteric doctrine. Indeed, there would be much more reason, on grounds of enigma or heresy, for turning Ecclesiastes out of the canon than either of them.

A third reason it may perhaps be invidious to hint at all; and surely it ought not to be asserted, or even strongly suggested. When I was studying in Leipsic, a friend of mine, much interested in German social and political movements, was at great pains to get hold of some of the incendiary tracts of a certain socialist faction, writings which the government had rigorously suppressed, and which the faction itself cherished as its vital power and rallying-cry. My friend, after having been conducted blindfold to an unknown part of the city and through obscure lanes and passages to a secret room, was unbandaged and bidden help himself from a chest that stood there. He did so; took the tracts home and opened them with great anticipations; —and to his disappointment found them so com-

monplace, and with all their rant so deadly dull, that he could hardly read them through. Now I would not for a moment imply that these apocryphal books are stupid or unreadable. There is interest and beauty enough in them to have kept them alive all these centuries; and that, when we consider how many books die before they complete their first year, is no small thing. They are not without an eminent degree of grace, amenity, truth. Nay, so very true are they sometimes as to have become truisms; and that is the trouble; there is as it were no *bite* to them, nothing to challenge, nothing to be roused and enlarged by. Job seemed to be aware of this quality in some of the Wisdom utterances when he exclaimed, "Who knoweth not things like these?" [1] They are utterances that seem to have been made when the stress, the uncertainties, the sense of gaining new victories against error, were over, and all that men had to do was to luxuriate in the store of truth they already had and make many books. Perhaps this is why these works have found their level among the hidden books. They are truth indeed, but tinged with the over-obvious, with truism. If our Bible is a people's library, appealing to the universal man's vital and eternal

[1] For this exclamation, with its occasion, see Job xii, 3.

interests, it must of course be full enough to round out its large message; but some directing Wisdom has taken care that it be not overstocked. There has been a strange and on the whole accurate sifting process, from which has been retained only the finest of the wheat. If a book has remained in the Apocrypha, we may pretty surely conclude it is because it ought to be there. It may not be bad; it may not be in any notable degree dull; it may even supply important omissions, or clear up knotty problems; but of these two apocryphal books of Wisdom, at least, we may say, as was said of David's worthies, that they "attained not to the first three," the mighty men who brought water from the well of Beth-lehem.

Of one thing more, too, we may be as sure as we are of an overruling Providence who is no respecter of persons. A really vital truth, essential for men to live by, cannot remain hid, cannot be monopolized by any esoteric sect, or order, or guild. It escapes into light and power; it will tolerate no bridle or suppression. We may be perfectly sure the truths that have hands and feet, that are weapons and building-tools, are where men can get at them and they can get at men. That is why the contents of that secret chest, so jealously guarded, so extravagantly valued, turned out to be

so insignificant: the large issues had escaped, and left only immaterial ones. That is why we may be sure we are discarding no essential thing if we come to this Apocrypha with abated interest. The vital truths of life are already, by the nature of the case, in the open; smiting and disturbing in fair battle, or if soothing, soothing by inspiring. We do not come to these hidden books, therefore, for *more* truth, but for other aspects and articulation of what we already have; not for any essential addition to our Wisdom structure, but for some details in the furnishing of the edifice already built.

II

Before we enter upon the specific description of them, however, a certain large phase of Wisdom, to which their relation must be calculated, falls here to be considered.

As we have advanced in our study of the Wisdom books, "these three mightiest," the feeling has grown upon us, I am sure, that behind and underneath them, somehow, there was a vast spiritual tide bearing them on to rounded fulness and symmetry of truth; that this body of Wisdom was not merely man's work, dug out of experience as ore, and smelted and forged and wrought into shape by mere human skill; but that somehow

beyond the shaping of man a larger structure was all the while orbing into form, as it were emerging out of the mysterious creative elements of the universe. This body of man's Wisdom, studious, verified, restrained by reason though it was, was man's Wisdom plus. In fact, the essential idea of it seemed equally self-justifying, whether we viewed the growing thing from the obviously human or from an apprehended divine side. It was like Abt Vogler's description, in Browning's poem, of the marvellous musical creation that had risen into being, beyond his power to limit it, as he sat improvising at his organ: —

"For higher still and higher . . .
Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul was in sight.
In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match man's birth,
Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky."

So he exults in wonder at the work that has come into being through this mystic double agency, and in the pride of his own art thinks that it is only of music that this can be said: —

"For think, had I painted the whole,
Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-worth:

Had I written the same, made verse — still, effect proceeds from cause,
Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud, in the artist-list enrolled: —
But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they are ! " [1]

Must we not adopt some such language as this, as we look in the large at this shaping of the great truths of Wisdom out of the discord and turmoil of the centuries, and see what they come to, in their self-proving ideals of sanity, integrity, character? We need not assume that our own peculiar art alone has a mystic source, or that we can trace our neighbor's art to more calculable laws than govern ours. Can we not put the Hebrew sages, Koheleth and the author of Job and the Proverb writers, by the side of Abt Vogler, and for their work too, as well as for music, claim "a flash of the will that can"? It is as if, when looking through the vista of their own intellect and getting, in the vision of Our Lady Wisdom, a sense of "a certain divine intellectual companionship with Deity," they saw no mere poetic figment but an actual matter-of-fact entity, whose reality was evidenced in its solid effects.

I am trying, it will be noted, to describe, how-

[1] Browning, "Abt Vogler," in *Dramatis Personæ.*

ever lamely, a very occult, marvellous thing. Perhaps it were better left untouched; but it is by some such way as this suggests that I am best able to image to myself a thing that here comes in sight; namely, what we call inspiration. Here, working with men's earthly insights and earthly craftsmanship, is a power which to every sincere mind is an authentic reality, yet which no man can define. Inspiration — it is almost pitiable to note the pettiness that has beset men's attempts to get it into realizable limits. They have so inveterately tried to steal behind the scenes and peddle out God's share of it, instead of trying to enrich their own; have weighed it in ounces and pennyweights, and proportioned it carefully between Isaiah and Esther and the imprecatory Psalms; have vaguely tried to postulate a sort of spiritual trance-mediumship, varying all the way from ecstasy to automatic writing. Very little, it seems to me, can come from such a paltry process of interpretation. Nor am I claiming here to contribute a solution. Enough, perhaps, if I may put in the place of these a view more fruitful of suggestion because larger. Our contemplation of Wisdom in literary light may help us to some more luminous aspects of the matter. We have seen how, when men wreaked their soul's powers on life and experience, drawing there-

out light and counsel, they not only led men but mysteriously were led; they builded better than they knew; a Power seemed working with them to make their thought sane and permanent. It was a Power such as every poet and artist feels as soon as he reaches the absolute centre of his art; and yet, from the fact that its product rounded into a finished Bible, it must have been in some sense unique. What now, in the light of to-day, can we make of this?

Every student of literature and history is familiar with the workings of what is called the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the time. We all feel something of it now, as soon as we stop to think, and as soon as we compare the sentiments that move us now with the sentiments in control a generation ago. We feel how inevitably we are in the power of it when, for instance, we take up an old author, like Dante or Chaucer, and try to think ourselves into his inner world, or as we say, get into his spirit. He moved in an atmosphere of thoughts and sentiments very vital and real to him, very different from ours, and to us perhaps seeming wholly dead issues. The spirit of the time has become other; is always shifting and changing; it decrees that an author, whenever he lives, shall write thus and not otherwise. To respond to any literature truly we

must, so to say, translate its spirit into our idiom, must identify what is of keenest interest to us with what in it is disguised in a foreign color and dress. Every age, ours with the rest, has its own sources of inspiration, closely enmeshed with its history; its suffusion point where its ideas are clearest, its emotions keenest, its sentiments most influential, its motives most potent. It was so in Ecclesiastes' time; and in Job's. They were dealing with immediate issues, with a spirit and sentiment of the time.

But in each of these ages, the age of Ecclesiastes and the age of the author of Job, we have seen an element enter which was not of an age, not of a nation, and we may squarely say not of earth; an element which, as soon as we disengage it from its old-time setting, lays as powerful hold on us, two millenniums later, as it did on the heart of man then. This element rose out of its time and was fitted to it; yet also in a larger sense it was in its day a misfit; nay, we may say, was bound to be a misfit until the better heart of man caught up with it and was adjusted to it. It rose out of a nation, with its peculiar preparation and history; and yet in a larger sense belongs not to that but to every nation. It owns no subservience to period or nation; that is why the utterances produced by

the pulsation of this spirit are not mere literature but archetypal literature — a Bible. It is as if, in every temporary history or vogue, truth absolute were struggling to the birth.

We have seen how such a pulsation wrought to bring a more humane and more Godlike order: how in the time of Job, when Wisdom was hardening into calculation and dogma, it delivered a vital central attack and turned the heart of man to his intrinsic integrity and life; how in the time of Ecclesiastes, when Wisdom was tempted by the soft and self-pleasing dreams of a future state, it came round in a flank attack and made men revise their notions of reward and character. Thus a higher warning of Wisdom came in always to announce when the lower was outworn, and when the ideal must become more inner and spiritual. And in each case it seemed to be pointing to a larger fulness and finish farther on; working out, as it were, a mighty drama and theme, which would come to clear light in some state of things yet unknown.

Where did this higher pulsation, this saving corrective, come from? Not all from the pseudonymous author Koheleth, nor from the anonymous writer of Job. These men were but its mouthpieces, yet their own masters too, and great

through its greatness. What was this spirit, timeless and world-embracing, which thus came to a focus where the age's need was the sorest, and solved its problem in terms of its own purer will? It was the mighty spirit of manhood, surging onward toward its maturity and adult fulness; this indeed and most truly; but also — why delay to name it? — the Spirit of God, coming to this little planet from the unseen and eternal, coming as to a life-giving tryst. And the making that spirit prevail, in human insight and conviction and utterance — this is inspiration.

The point of cardinal interest in all our study of this literature of Wisdom is, as I have repeatedly intimated, the fact that this inspiration does not confine its favoring visits to the duly legitimated priests and prophets; it is superinduced also, in undeniable largeness and genuineness, on that unforced and exploring spirit of man which, in the free search for wisdom, delved as it were scientifically into the common values of life. Thus this third great strand of truth, the strand of reverent reason, has demonstrated its authenticity and divineness, as woven in with the rest. In equal degree with oracle and vision we get from it the sense of something hewn out of the mystery of things, rounded, finished, evidently right.

Another thing we seem to recognize, too, when the relations of Wisdom appear as I have traced them. Ecclesiastes' final clearing of the issue gives the impression of having closed the case. After his uncompromising solution, his massive blocking out of the completed Wisdom structure, we feel as if Wisdom had run its cycle on the present scale and returned to its starting-point, had fairly revealed the sum of manhood; and henceforth there is only the making of many books, the relegation of these great Wisdom principles to that study which, though a delight and appeasement, is also a weariness of the flesh. We know too, now that the structure is before us in rounded contour, we know by a divine power of recognition within us, that such a symmetry of truth, such gradual moulding of it through centuries into self-consistent fulness, could not have come from man alone; it came also, as it were the response of deeper nature to her reverent inquirer from the unseen places where the Creator-Spirit is evermore at work evolving a divine-human manhood.

III

But we have left our apocryphal books of Wisdom long waiting while we turned aside to pursue

these high themes. Returning to them now, we ask, What is their relation to all this? Have we adduced these considerations of an inspiring guidance in order, coming back to these books, to deny *them* inspiration? No: not at all. We are not concerned to weigh and parcel out divine influences here, or to say how much we ought to accept, how much reject. It is not theological councils and courts, nor chairs of literature, that settle such things; the verdict, if it settles the case at all, is within us. Wisdom itself has proved this. How, then, shall we evaluate them?

Well, this is how it impresses me. We have seen the greater books, the rough-hewn issue as it were, advancing into ordered form, marching onward step by step, each to its appointed landing-stage; until at length the feeling arose, Here we stand, our cycle finished, the rest is but book-making. It was a sublime forward march and campaign of Wisdom. And now, as we set beside those books these others, the impression we get is, as it were, the impression of marking time. Wisdom has halted in her tracks, but still keeps up her motion; her energies still all there and ready for the next word of advance. These books do not get us forward, in any essential degree, in new discovery; but on the other hand, they are not vacu-

ous and trifling, or retrogressive. They simply tread loyally and steadily in the good old paths, of law and common sense and sound character; keeping up useful exercise, and hardening the spiritual muscles to endurance and reliability.

There is no little avail in marking time. When I lived in Germany and used to observe the recruits in the barracks going through their everlasting drill, their angular puppet-like motions, and their absurd goose-step, it sometimes seemed to me unnecessarily laborious and severe. But when afterward I observed how out of the lumbering, awkward demeanor of a back-country yokel there gradually emerged grace of movement and a manly, erect carriage, I revised my opinion. The goose-step had demonstrated its usefulness. It did not produce everything, nor the highest thing, but it had its defensible office in the making of a soldier. There may be, in the world's discipline also, good and needed results from an era of marking time. When an age has been fed on rich and concentrated ideas, time must be given for these to be chewed and digested and assimilated, and so worked naturally into the spiritual tissues of men. An age cannot bear many originative thinkers, many strikers-out of new movements, at once. They would generate ideas too fast to be

taken care of. Hence the seeming fallow periods in progress and literary genius. It is provided for in the unseen places that the Koheleths and the Luthers and the Newtons and the Darwins be sufficiently rare. The ferment of thought and action that they initiate must be naturalized and tempered, must settle into the equable currents of living, where it mixes with the common function of existence.

And meanwhile there is the great rank and file, the unwieldy body of men who take ideas slowly, who subsist on derived and diluted thought, and who for spiritual erectness of movement must be patiently drilled in the goose-step. It takes most of the world's time, and most of its outlay of educative effort, to care for these. I do not wish to be uncomplimentary, but really I am not sure but some of us, or at least some whom we know, belong to this category. And indeed the life that we all live, we who are clever and originative, as well as the stupid and stolid, is predominantly commonplace; it lies along the flats and levels of existence, and its work is mostly routine. To very few of us is it given, and then only in rare moments, to mount up with wings as eagles; more of us, perhaps, can run and not be weary, though running is not our common gait; but all of us,

every day, have need of that very lowly and useful ability, to walk and not faint. Yes: there is a good word to be said for marking time; none of us but can march the better for having known the dull but seasoning discipline of it.

IV

It is with this thought of their homely educative value in mind that we now approach more specifically these two specimens of the book-making that Ecclesiastes recognized in his Wisdom world.

As we look at them, and attempt to locate their tone and thought, we become aware, as Dean Stanley has pointed out, that Jewish Wisdom no longer radiates from a single centre. Its standard-setting sage can no longer, like Ecclesiastes, assume to be "king over Israel in Jerusalem." It has come to have two centres, Jerusalem and Alexandria, the centre where the temple and the home people are, and the centre where the Jews of the dispersion come in contact with the cosmopolitan sentiments and standards of the great world. Between these two, one figures that there was constantly going on a process like what we used to learn about in physics, when we studied how liquids of different density pass outward and inward through a porous partition, and grad-

ually mingle together. There was an exosmosis and endosmosis of elements, by which the Jewish became more gracious and cosmopolitan, and the Greek took on more solidity and stamina. Thus these two books, so far as they go, are landmarks of movement toward a period when, in Wisdom culture, there would be no more Jew nor Greek to separate the minds that were looking at fundamental things; but rather a common suffusion and idiom, in which men, whether in Jerusalem or Alexandria, Rome or Wittenberg, could see eye to eye. Only, we will remember that the denser liquid, the Hebrew Wisdom which set the dominating type of it all, was identified with Jerusalem; for as our Lord Himself said, salvation is of the Jews. But Hebrew Wisdom, so staunchly based, can afford to be liberal; can reach out and gather wealth from minds that have brought other thoughts and other customs to bear upon life. This is what, as Dean Stanley thinks, these apocryphal Wisdom books do. "The one," he says, "is the recommendation of the theology of Palestine to Alexandria — 'the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach;' the other is the recommendation of the theology of Alexandria to Palestine — 'the Wisdom of Solomon.'"[1] For theology here let us sub-

[1] Stanley, *Jewish Church*, vol. iii, p. 296.

stitute Wisdom; for these books are essentially in the Wisdom strain.

1. The Wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach, otherwise called Ecclesiasticus, or the "Church Book," which was originally written in Hebrew, has been very recently the centre of unusual interest to the scholarly world, from the fact that the Hebrew original, long lost, has been less than ten years discovered. We get our English version at second hand, from a translation made into Greek by his grandson, and dated in the eight and thirtieth year of King Ptolemy Euergetes, that is, one hundred and thirty-two years before Christ. His grandfather's Hebrew original, then, comes perhaps from the first quarter of that century, and so not many years after the writing of Ecclesiastes. It is a long book, fifty-one chapters, the longest scripture book, it is said, written by one author.

When authors write long books, they either have a great deal to say, or a great deal of leisure to say it in. The whole tone of the book supports the impression of this second alternative. It answers well to the conception of a loyal, thoughtful Jew, well read in his nation's lore; a man of leisure and quiet study, traversing with a tranquil delight the rich field of Jewish literature, and seeking to make this acceptable to a world larger than

Palestine. Especially so as this Jewish literature takes the form and atmosphere of Wisdom, that is, a broad and unliturgic application of ideas to life, as it were a gracious philosophy of conduct. It is as if this Jew would proudly show the Greeks that the Hebrews too had a philosophy which in its way could compete with theirs, and which need not apologize either for crudeness of style, or poverty of content. But he does not attempt, like the author of Job, to strike out new and bold paths, or to startle men, as did Ecclesiastes, into a reactive or corrective way of thinking. He stands in the good old ways, accepting all of them; is in fact concerned with the law of Moses, and with the sound and seasoned historic past, rather than with any future which, though promising, is yet untried. He is confessedly a book-maker, who has drawn his impulses not so directly from life as from other books. This fact is at the outset recognized by the grandson who translates him; who in his preface thus describes his procedure and object: "My grandfather Jesus, having much given himself to the reading of the law, and the prophets, and the other books of our fathers, and having gained great familiarity therein, was drawn on also himself to write somewhat pertaining to instruction and wisdom; in order that those who

love learning, and are addicted to these things, might make progress much more by living according to the law." [1]

As this preface would indicate, the book was written just at the time when the Hebrew nation, having through their scribes and rabbis become aware what a glorious past was theirs, and what a literary heritage they had, were becoming, as other nations called them, "the people of a book;" and this author, it would seem, was coming to look upon the literature he studied not merely as many books but as one book, one canon. "The law, and the prophets, and the other books," — this phrasing names the same threefold division used afterward to characterize the make-up of the Hebrew Bible, תורה נביאים וכתובים: the same that our Lord Himself used, only He called the third division "the Psalms," after the name of the first book in it. So Jesus the son of Sirach writes, with the radiance of the canonical Hebrew Bible shining behind him, with keen literary appreciation of its beauty and truth; and yet with the fervor not of a reformer, like Ecclesiastes and the author of Job, nor yet of an ardent and impassioned missionary, like the second Isaiah; rather of a bookman and dilettant, who sits cosily in his library far from the

[1] Ecclesiasticus, *Prologue*.

noise of the world, and in his refined tastes is inclined to despise the common man "whose talk," as he says, "is of bullocks." So his book, as compared to the original scripture, is a mild, reflected radiance, like moonlight to sunlight; it does not seem, in the passion of a vital issue, so to get down to close grips with the inner heart-throbs of men.

The character of the mashal, or aphorism form, prevailing in the book, answers also to this bookish, as it were academic character. We saw how Wisdom began with the pithy condensed couplet, which got all its lesson into closest words of antithesis or briefest suggestion of simile and metaphor; and how it went on from this to a longer mashal, or to a chain of story or description or argument, yet keeping the individual couplet which was its unit still full of vim and spirit. Here in Ecclesiasticus, for the most part, the mashal has become a kind of short essay, wherein several aspects of the thought are given, or wherein the imagery is not entirely illustrative but revelled in, so to say, for its own sake. In sum we may say, the mashal is in complete running order, graceful, finished, smoothly constructed,—with the fire taken out, the edge a little blunted. The grandson fears that this loss of effect may be owing to the fact that this is a translation instead of an original;

"for," he says, "things originally spoken in Hebrew have not the same force in them when they are translated into another tongue." It is true we have not the same rugged, meaty idiom back of our version that we had in the case of the other books; but this does not fully account for the matter. We can still discern the spirit of the man, and the pasturing-ground of his thinking: a sweet and gentle amateur spirit, so to say, ranging in a region of derived and reflected ideas; but somehow Wisdom, as embodied in his words, seems to have lost its cutting edge. It does not smite men and bring them up standing, nor rouse the interest of those who have not already discovered it; but addressing itself, as the preface says, to those who "are addicted to these things," it sweetly soothes and charms them. One is reminded of Abraham Lincoln's quaint, non-committal, "If a person likes that sort of thing, why, it is just the sort of thing he likes." It would be unjust to Jesus Sirach to compare him with Martin Farquhar Tupper, that very minor poet who by his "Proverbial Philosophy" had such astonishing popularity half a century ago; for Tupper's work is hopelessly dead, while Jesus Sirach's is in a limbo of the Elysium beyond death; but the two leave a similar impression, Tupper in greater degree, of a certain

lack of fire, of probing thrust, of grip on the elemental things.

Yet there are fine passages in the book, and well-wrought literary workmanship. The whole book is richly worth perusing and companying with; we remember how in Adam Bede's Sunday morning reading "the son of Sirach's keen-edged words would bring a delighted smile" in spite of his sense that they were not inspired. The book begins, after the conventional tradition, with a praise of Wisdom, a kind of ode; and farther on Wisdom speaks in praise of herself, after the manner of the early part of Proverbs. We may perhaps, without disparagement, say it is Proverbs and water. There are some new applications of Wisdom to life: on Adaptation of Behavior to various sorts of men; on Meddlesomeness; on Choice of Company; on Niggardliness; on Free Will; on Graciousness; on Women Bad and Good; on Reasoning; on Health; on Disease and Physicians; on the Wisdom of Business and the Wisdom of Leisure; on Friendship. I use Professor Moulton's headings; his edition of the book, in the Modern Reader's Bible, is especially good. The most notable parts of the book, perhaps, are toward the end; where there occurs a noble Hymn of Praise on the Works of Creation; and following that a

really unique and original kind of scripture, a Praise of Famous Men. "Let us now praise famous men," the author begins, "and our fathers that begat us;" and from righteous Enoch, away back in the patriarchal age, down to Simon the son of Onias, his own contemporary probably, — more than a score in all, as well as classes of men, — he deploys before us a noble roll-call of the worthies of Israel. It is a forerunner, perhaps a suggestion, of the much-esteemed eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

Of passages or inspirations from this Book of Ecclesiasticus, modern literature and music have availed themselves quite liberally. John Bunyan's stormy religious nature once received great comfort, without knowing the source, from the verse, "Look at the generations of old and see; did any ever trust in the Lord and was confounded?" Bernard of Clairvaux, it is said, caught from Ecclesiasticus a certain inwardness of meditative spirit and applied it to a Christian theme, in the Latin hymn, "Jesu dulcis memoria," translated into our familiar hymns, "Jesus, the very thought is sweet," and "Jesus, the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills the breast." So too it is said the German choral, "Nun danket alle Gott," "Now thank we all our God, with heart, and

hands, and voices," was taken from suggestions of this book. And some of us may recall that the composer Brahms, in his last composition, the "four earnest songs for bass," set the third song to those piercing words of Ecclesiasticus: —

"O Death,
How bitter art thou
Unto him that dwelleth in peace,
To him that hath joy in his possessions,
And liveth free from trouble;
To him whose ways are prosperous in all things,
To him that still may eat!

"O Death,
How welcome thy call
To him that is in want, and whose strength doth fail him,
And whose life is but a pain,
Who hath nothing to hope for,
And cannot look for relief!"[1]

So it has fared with the book: passages, strains, reverberations of it have sounded deep in the heart of the meditative through all the centuries; it is a much loved book.

2. With the book entitled The Wisdom of Solomon our review of the pre-Christian body of Wisdom comes to a close: this last, like the first in the series, and something like eight and a half centuries after the death of Solomon, still binding itself in the same bundle of writings by taking the

[1] Ecclesiasticus xli, 1, 2.

name of the large-hearted son of David. This book, it appears, was written by an Alexandrian Jew, perhaps in the neighborhood of a century before Christ, with one main object of infusing into the Jewish mind some of the amenities of the Greek way of thinking; and with another, one feels sure, of recording the writer's reaction and disgust, the reaction of a more deep-seeing nature, against the splendid idolatries with which there in Egypt he was surrounded. It is as if in the very dialect and philosophical idiom of heathenism he would restate and confute its ideas of the world: for here again the denser fluid, the dominating spirit, is from Jerusalem, salvation is of the Jews. So there is about the book, in the first place, a greater inwardness of interpretation than we have before been impressed with. God is still there, and nature, and the wonders of miracle and history, as the Hebrew writings set them forth; but somehow the soul of man, his psychological powers and tendencies, are intimately involved with these and active; as if the manhood soul were no longer set over against nature, to receive beyond his will nature's blessings and disasters, but were rather a part of the law of nature, working from his own motion. This, as we see, is a quasi-scientific way of looking at the world. It has

in the Greek attitude and tone of thinking been set in the way of evolving a cosmic, as distinguished from a national philosophy.

But in the second place, the book is conscious that while the Greek approach to things is delicate and true, its underlying principle, its hidden starting-point, is rotten and false. It is built on that idolatrous heathenism which degraded man's ideals by associating them with wood and stone, with beasts and the lower operations of nature. The Wisdom which centuries ago began with reverence toward an unseen and holy God has come now to measure itself with the Wisdom which began in blind worship of things seen or dreaded, and which sought to control them by necromancy and enchantment. Which is the nobler, which sees things more truly as they are and is more sanely adjusted to them, cannot be in doubt. The clear-seeing eye of reverence and righteousness has demonstrated its power of true vision; salvation is of the Jews. It is in the latter part of the book especially that the writer works out this idea; and this he does not by attacking the idolatries around him, as they fill his sight and poison the atmosphere, but by going into that past history wherein long time ago the Hebrews and the Egyptians came into conflict; especially the

history of the plagues of Egypt, showing how the very enchantments of the Egyptians wrought havoc in their souls and turned against them, while at the same time the simple trust and piety of the Hebrews was as it were a light in their dwellings and a guide to freedom. The book is a philosophy of the vital elements of character; a kind of large parable of history, presenting in veiled form the author's judgment of the spiritual conditions around him and their working tendencies. And the fact that this purports to be the Wisdom of Solomon is an interesting Nemesis of historical criticism; for the historic Solomon it was who made such wreck of his higher nature by becoming entangled in Egyptian alliances and idolatry.

In fact, our book is the Wisdom of Solomon as the writer views it to have existed in germ in the historic king, and to have run a self-purifying course from more to more, and to have matured according to the potency of the germ. So one prominent part of the book is an idealized description, put into Solomon's own mouth, of his youth, and his prayer for wisdom, and his experience of Wisdom's inner saving power. We have an analogue to this in modern literature in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King;" which portray King Arthur

and his Round Table, not as they would have been recognized by us if we had been transported to their actual age and surroundings, not as history could verify them at all, but as they, possessing the divine germ of manhood, had it in them to be, and as that germ would mature to fruitage in the nineteenth century. It is all one power of manhood: the occasion, the environment, the heritage of years, the greater light and vision, bring it out.

One more veiled remonstrance the book contains; veiled, I say, for the times with their Greek exposure have brought greater amenity into the literary tone: a remonstrance, very gentle and courteous, against what the writer deems the bad tendency of Ecclesiastes' counsel. It is directed especially against his counsel of eating and drinking and enjoying life, coming as this does in the face of his assertion that we cannot see beyond this earthly existence. The writer judges Ecclesiastes superficially, and turns aside, or rather fails to fathom, the real gist of his argument. It is in fact the same snap judgment that hasty readers have always caught up, and perhaps the judgment that the years since Ecclesiastes had deposited in the popular heart as a sort of tag by which to mark the sage's mind. It amounts in our author's case, as it has amounted since, to attributing to Eccle-

siastes, or perhaps to a school which had exploited some of his supposedly Epicurean tendencies, an animus against righteousness, and a native bias toward profane and unseemly revelry; a kind of reckless levity in the face of death and vanity. "Court not death," our author begins, "in the error of your life; neither draw upon yourselves destruction by the works of your hands;" then going on to describe the "ungodly men who by their hands and their words called death unto them," he thus estimates their reasoning: "For they said within themselves, reasoning not aright [who "they" are cannot remain doubtful to one who has read Ecclesiastes]: 'Short and sorrowful is our life; and there is no healing when a man cometh to his end, and none was ever known that gave release from Hades. Because by mere chance were we born, and hereafter we shall be as though we had never been; because the breath in our nostrils is smoke, and while our heart beateth reason is a spark, which being extinguished, the body shall be turned into ashes, and the spirit shall be dispersed as thin air. And our name shall be forgotten in time, and no man shall remember our works; and our life shall pass away as the traces of a cloud, and shall be scattered as is a mist, when it is chased by the

beams of the sun, and overcome by the heat thereof. For our allotted time is the passing of a shadow, and our end retreateth not; because it is fast sealed, and none turneth it back. Come therefore and let us enjoy the good things that now are; and let us use the creation with all our soul as youth's possession. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine and perfumes, and let no flower of spring pass us by; let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered; let none of us go without his share in our proud revelry; everywhere let us leave tokens of our mirth; because this is our portion, and our lot is this.' " [1]

All this is what our author attributes to those who are "reasoning not aright;" and the phrases and turns of expression that he brings in from Ecclesiastes betray what "reasoning" he had all the while in mind. It is his veiled opposition to what he considers the baleful influence of such counsel as Ecclesiastes gives. At the same time he twists Ecclesiastes out of true; amplifies him toward the depraved instead of the wisely righteous tendency for which Ecclesiastes really stands. We must conclude it to be a case of a small mind attacking a large one, in the bias of a superficial criticism.

[1] Wisdom ii, 1–9.

I have quoted this passage in order to illustrate not only the thought of our author but his style. We can see here the weakness no less than the beauty of it. In his hands the form of the mashal has reached the farthest possible remove from the terse, crisp couplet of the beginning of Wisdom. Here it consists of a nucleus assertion, like the text of a sermon; which assertion is then enlarged upon: drawn out in endless amplification and we must say dilution, phase upon phase, detail upon detail, rolling out the idea so thin that we begin to wonder if a thing that flows so glibly can ever stop. He is evidently much enamored of his own literary fluency. But mere fluency is not the worst of it. The amplification has taken the reins into its own hands, and spreads out at its own sweet will, no longer thinking primarily of the truth, but only of the picture and the rhythm. We see this here in his fatally fluent portrayal of Ecclesiastes' supposably bad involvements and propensities. He does not intend, perhaps, to be unjust, but his descriptive ardor runs away with him. Ecclesiastes' counsel to eat and drink, for instance, awakens such images of the accompaniments of eating and drinking that his very imaginative impulse drives him into a deduction of idle and dissolute revelry. Then, apparently pushed

on by the momentum of that, he next sets these idle roysterers to oppressing the righteous poor, and then spreads out this idea in turn, until he has made the men who began with what he considers lame reasoning end with shameful cruelty and baseness. It is, to my mind, an example of the length to which unbridled literary fluency may carry a man.

It seems to me impossible to deny something of this diluting tendency to our exuberant author. Yet his book is in many ways a noble one, and has had great influence. St. Paul, as Professor Bacon points out, has profited by it largely. And further, one interesting fact comes out of this veiled answer to Ecclesiastes; and that is, that by this author's time the doctrine of immortality, toward which Ecclesiastes manifested such austere caution, had become an accepted tenet of popular belief, as indeed it could hardly help doing. We judge this from the assurance with which in his sweetly flowing way he enlarges upon the idea, as if in making it good against the earlier sage he had the prevailing tide of sentiment with him. For the most outspoken pre-Christian statement of immortality, indeed, we have to go not to the canonical writers but to him.

"The souls of the righteous," he says, " are in

the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seem to have died; and their departure was accounted to be their hurt, and their journeying away from us to be their ruin: but they are in peace. For even if in the sight of men they be punished, their hope is full of immortality; and having borne a little chastening, they shall receive great good." [1]

I omit in quoting some of the wordiness into which he runs the idea; its beauty appears better so. The following, which contains somewhat less padding than usual, is still more noteworthy: —

"But a righteous man, though he die before his time, shall be at rest. For honorable old age is not that which standeth in length of time, nor is its measure given by number of years; but understanding is gray hairs unto men, and an unspotted life is ripe old age. Being found well-pleasing unto God he was beloved of him, and while living among sinners he was translated. . . . Being made perfect in a little while, he fulfilled long years; for his soul was pleasing unto the Lord; therefore hasted he out of the midst of wickedness." [2]

A rather colorless immortality this, to be sure; no aspiration, no strong-pinioned, eagle-soaring

[1] Wisdom iii, 1–5. [2] Wisdom iv, 7–14.

life here, any more than in Sheol, but just a tranquil assurance of rest, of cessation of strife and disturbance. "That is how I figure heaven," the turbulent-minded Carlyle once said, "just rest." Jesus Sirach, too, images it in the same way: —

"Weep for the dead [he says], for light hath failed him;
And weep for a fool, for understanding hath failed him:
Weep more sweetly for the dead, because he hath found rest;
But the life of the fool is worse than death." [1]

That was as far as the pre-Christian consciousness could get: an eventual subsidence, so to say, of this turmoil of existence, the escape, somewhere and somehow, from the evils and hazards of living, into peace.

And in general this is a fair image of the result to which these "many books," with their placidly ruminating thought, their marking time, have conducted the literature of Wisdom. They have added nothing essential to Ecclesiastes, however truly they may have filled gaps in the tissue of life, or rounded out the body of truth. Even their immortality is a passive thing, not truly vital. Their regards are turned mainly to the past; and here indeed they have done the world great service, ranging over a divinely ordered history, and promoting, as Professor Cheyne says of Ecclesiasticus, "the reconciliation between the practical

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxii, 11.

ethics of the inspired 'wise men' of old and the all-embracing demands of the Law." Thus they did much to weave the three strands, the contributions of prophet, priest, and sage, together into one unitary cable of noble teaching. But in general one gets from them a sense of tapering off, of gradual drawing of the finished lines together, as if, in order to go on, Wisdom needed a new access of vitality. We read the later utterances of the Wisdom of Solomon, with their boundless volubility of amplification, and it sometimes seems as if the author were not speaking because he had something to say, but because he was wound up, or perhaps had a contract, to say something. You perceive the difference. Some of us have read more modern literature that produced a similar impression. Of making many books, in fact, there is no end; at least, the end is not yet.

V

But have we, then, no positive result to show for all this literary activity and diffusion? Has Wisdom too run her cycle, like Koheleth's great wheel of being, and returned to her starting-point; and has she gathered no momentum, no surplusage of forward-surging energy? Is she dying — or getting ready to live?

That one great movement of things, running its course, should gradually subside on itself and cease is quite in the order of nature and progress.

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world," [1]

is the word that King Arthur, wounded to the death, speaks to comfort the one surviving knight of the Round Table, from the barge that is bearing him away. And here in Wisdom we have reached a landing-stage from which we can begin to see how inevitably some of the old means of climbing and scaffolding, having served their purpose, must be discontinued.

Let us see how this is. Ecclesiastes has conducted us to a broad ideal of manhood character whereon the soul, sufficient to itself and ready for judgment, can take its destiny in confidence and stand alone. We are, so to say, out of leading-strings. In the presence of such assured wisdom of character we become aware of the comparative deadness of accumulating advice, rules, counsels, laws; they have become stale, as Job's maxims did to him. In the light and strength we have, we can do something to make our own rules of living. Ecclesiastes felt this when he advised his disciple not to be too

[1] Tennyson, *Morte d'Arthur*.

righteous nor too wicked, not too abysmally wise and not a self-made fool. He had the idea of being no longer an apprentice, painfully enslaved to procedures and methods, but a master workman, who could take advantage of his rules, and even for a higher object transcend them, because the object of them was *in* him, a second nature. We see also something like this in the evolution of the literary form, the mashal, from antithetic point to diffused discursiveness. As Wisdom went on, and the substantial old principles were all discovered, she had to go farther afield for maxims, had to hunt out novelties of expression or analogy, or to adduce more minute and subtle applications. Ecclesiastes betrays his feeling of this necessity, in some degree, by searching out pithy sayings from his collection and inlaying them, as a kind of spice and clinching, with his own course of thought. Jesus Sirach, too, feels that the supply is getting so well gathered that new material has to be hunted for, and that he himself is rather late in the field.

"And I awaked up last [he says],
As one that gleaneth after the grape-gatherers:
By the blessing of the Lord I got before them,
And filled my wine-press as one that gathereth grapes." [1]

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxxiii, 16.

Such a supply of precept must eventually run out, or become increasingly far-fetched; just as, according to what the novelists are beginning to say, the effective plots and situations are becoming used up. Ecclesiasticus is still copious, but the edge is getting worn, the mashal does not bite, like fresh new truth. The Wisdom of Solomon, too, loses its bite; it is thinned out into a long-drawn sweetness. All this, of course, is a matter of form, but it connotes something deeper. The aphorism itself, the counsel, is losing its freshness because man already knows so well what to do, and needs less to be told. In fact, character is striking deeper root in humanity, becoming more initiative, more able to walk independently of counsel, because the sense of counsel, the Wisdom, is becoming increasingly a matter of course.

And this in fact is what is taking place among all the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad. This making of many books implies literary activity; it implies also that general ferment and interest which produces literary activity. The books of a nation grow out of the nation's soil; they return also to the soil again, to fertilize it anew. The familiar, every-day, comrade-like counsel of the sages, as they took their place in the city gates, or made their common-sense researches in life and

experience and history, has had an untold leavening effect on all the common and workday classes; of which the making of many books has been only a casual indication, a straw showing which way the great current of the nation's wholesomest spirit was setting.

It is with the atmosphere of a people's life, the fragrance — or miasm — of sentiment and controlling motive with which the air is laden, that we must reckon, if we would know the true inwardness of that nation's character. Travellers say that one who has not been in Oriental countries, like Egypt or India, can have no idea of the enormous difference between countries, as regards the whole tone and consciousness of things, the nameless rapport and presupposition which either enables a man to lean on his neighbor's heart, as knowing that there is truth there, or which compels him to maintain an attitude of suspicion and distrust. The very air may be poisoned with falseness and treachery and spiritual malaria, or fragrant with honesty and good-will. And it all foots back to the ideas, the pervading pulse of sentiment and gentle constraint, with which the whole lump is leavened. To keep the atmosphere of a nation pure, there must circulate a disinfectant and ozonic power of principle, of well-defined standards, of healthy insight.

"Where there is no vision," says one of the Hezekian proverbs, "the people perish," — or to translate more accurately, "are let loose and let down." I wonder if, in our land of free speech and activities, we are sufficiently mindful of what is really the greatest blessing of all, the clear, pure, righteous air of America, the heritage from the noble ideas of our fathers, and from the Bible truth in which they and we have been nurtured.

Well, here we see that Bible truth as it were in the making; emerging out of the silent depths into kindly human counsel, and beginning to vibrate in the common heart. We see what Wisdom is coming to be in the field and market, and among the fishermen of the lake, and at home in Galilean villages, Cana and Capernaum and Nazareth, and among those sincere-minded people who are "waiting for the consolation of Israel:" a reasonableness, a sane proportioning of things, a felt power of inner authority; rich in homely precepts and aphorisms, feeding on them as on daily food, yet not depending on them blindly, as if life were an affair of rules and recipes; because the character evolved from its principles is becoming a people's second nature. The nation is being pervasively educated on its way to that springtide ideal of the poet: —

> "'T is as easy now for the heart to be true
> As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,—
> 'T is the natural way of living." [1]

We see the fruits of it not yet; for not yet has the voice reached us from that Galilean village to whose peaceful precincts we trace, on its earthly side, "the Wisdom of God and the power of God;" but the influences are already in motion, the seed-germ has been sown; and though for the moment it fall into the ground and die, yet earth and air and sunshine and kindly rain have it in keeping. The seed that dies, so the soil is clean and well-harrowed, the seed sown by sages in experience and neighborly counsel, the seed hidden away in many obscure books and meditative hearts, is getting ready to live again, in harvests.

When Carlyle's meditative hero Teufelsdröckh had survived the vehement reaction and unrest of his Everlasting No, and set his soul in grim defiance against the falsities of his universe, there ensued a period which the author named The Centre of Indifference: a saner period, wherein, though the light of final solution had not yet arrived, the soul, casting its eyes around, became more fully aware than before of brother-men, with their thoughts and deeds, of comrade hearts, beat-

[1] Lowell, *Sir Launfal.*

ing on to fulfil also their portion of the same great heritage of life, of the past and what it had bequeathed, of the masters of speech and action, of the experience which was drawing him in from isolation to the interest of a world. The Wisdom that we have studied has had to pronounce, as it were out of the unseen, a No on many things: on the manifold folly of fools; on the hardness and self-deception of cant; on the idle and self-pleasing dreams of the illusioned. And in the subject we have considered in this chapter it has been as if there had ensued a season of calm weather, a centre of indifference, wherein the soul of Wisdom could look around and in more leisurely mood take her bearings. But this Centre of Indifference is by no means a dead centre. Life is pulsing there, and the upbuilding powers of manhood; — as Carlyle says of his hero: "Yet surely his bands are loosening; one day he will hurl the burden far from him, and bound forth free and with a second youth." [1] The dawn is even now whitening the eastern sky; the soul so long passive, so long tutored and led and counselled and acted upon, must learn to act in its own divinely naturalized Wisdom; its goal must soon be the Everlasting Yea.

[1] Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, chap. viii.

VII

THE WISDOM OF GOD

THE NEW ERA

I. The philosophic ideal.
II. The responding life.
III. The test in action.
IV. Homily and story.

VII

THE WISDOM OF GOD

SINCE the period covered by our former chapters there has intervened the cardinal event from which the world numbers its years; as if with that event mankind had begun to live; as if it were only a matter of nineteen centuries ago that the busy wheels of history had begun so to move, and to such result, that the records of time could count their product as accomplished work. And the world's calendar, from whatever cause so reckoned, is in this regard correct. Then it was that what we may call manhood truly began to live; because then it was, for the first time, that life absolute and rounded, life emancipate and adult, came to full light and function. All before that, noble as it was in its ardor of discovery and ordered beauty of growth, was after all but a childhood, led by law and fed by wisdom; a preparatory schooling, wherein a race under tutors and governors was getting ready to live, preparing itself to emerge eventually into that supreme stadium of manhood where the law of being should be the law of the spirit of life, and the wisdom of

living should be dictated no longer from without but from within.

With all this the genius and literature of Wisdom are intimately involved. It must share, and share equally, in the transfigured destiny of the other strains of scripture utterance. The venerable Mosaic law, as we know, so long in the keeping of priests and sanhedrim, died at last as a body of extrinsic rules, but not until it had received a new lease of life, in such an expression and power as it never had known before. Prophecy too died, in the person of its last prophet, than whom none among the sons of men was greater; but even while John the Baptist yet spoke, his word and the word of his predecessors were melting into the glory of perfect fulfilment. What then became of Wisdom? We have seen how it burgeoned in men's esteem until to some of its lightest utterances they gave the name of oracle, as if it too were a prophetic word, vitalized by divine authority. Then, after it had established great solid principles of life among men, it seemed for a while to subside to the meditations of littérateurs and dilettants; and then we lose the thread of it for a while, having nowhere to look, except perhaps to the scribes, who seem to be running it into the swamps of Targums and Talmuds, a sorry

anticlimax, on the whole; or possibly, though no one would suspect this, back into the country, somewhere in the Galilee or circuit of the Gentiles, where men's view of life is less academic and sophisticated. And here, in fact, strange as it may seem, is where we find it. Nature has taken fresh clay from the soil where the people's heart beats most truly, and out of it has moulded the Sage of sages, who as soon as He opens His mouth brings to men words which elicit the deep response of the universal heart, words whose wisdom evidences itself, because He speaks as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Here, then, the Wisdom which seemed ready to die has risen again, risen not in philosophy alone but in life; and in such majesty of utterance and deed that when men get used to it, and compare it with the ideals of men, they are fain to call it the Wisdom of God.

To get at the soul of this new Wisdom, and to make clear not only its radical difference from what has gone before, but what is equally real, its essential union and continuity with the cruder but preparatory ideals of the past, is the business of this chapter.

I

When this Wisdom of God came to men, it had estranging, apparently unworkable features. Perhaps this must needs be the case with anything that comes from heaven to measure itself with the standards of earth. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord," an ancient prophecy had said; and the reason it went on to give was that the ways of this new Wisdom are higher, as much higher as heaven is higher than earth. There is a Truth somewhere above, in which all the converging ideals of Wisdom meet, if you will follow them far enough. The trouble is, men get too soon to the end of their tether. And so when the Jews, who like the scientists estimate things by signs, saw this new manifestation of Wisdom, they could not discern what the sign meant, and therefore would not commit themselves to its truth. It was no Wisdom to them, but only a stumbling-block. To the Greeks likewise, who spent their days looking for a reasonable philosophy of life, this new thing was sheer foolishness, did not seem to have the sanity and consistency of a philosophy at all. And the fact is, much may be said for both Jew and Greek. The Wisdom of God was and is unrea-

sonable, just as unreasonable as it can be; and herein lies its saving quality, making it the hope of the world. The hope of the world, we may affirm, of its new life, of its vital progress in manhood, lay in the coming of a new thing, what we call faith, a heroic faith which, in the promotion of a new order, would dare and do venturesome, unreasonable, seemingly hopeless things. Analyze the inner forces of history, and you will see this is so. The world, heathen and Jewish alike, had justly defined all the reasonable common-sense virtues. We have seen how in these directions the Apocryphal sages had reached a point where they had practically exhausted the big issues of life and were going farther and farther afield for new ideas. Justice and temperance and self-respect and prudence and tact and moderation: all these eminently reasonable things were fairly well incorporated into the working ideals of life. And yet somehow life was at a kind of deadlock; and such an enigma that the accredited leaders, in whose hands were the executive functions, were asking in dazed bewilderment, "What is truth?" It was time to make trial of the unreasonable things: to drop the self-aggrandizing pride and try humility and meekness; to drop that self-bound reason which would go only so far as it

could see the end, and try faith in what was out of sight; to hope for a world whose condition seemed hopeless; to love a humanity which had become base and unlovely. An estranging thing this, to Jew and Greek, to the scientific and the philosophical mind alike; a stumbling-block and a foolishness. But this, just this, was the Wisdom of God; and in the long run it proved to have laid in life a foundation other than which no man can lay.

At the beginning of our discussion we remarked that the utterances of the sages, unrelated and unsystematic as their mashals seemed, were really on their way to a full-orbed and unitary philosophy of life; and we have seen how Job and Koheleth — yes, and Satan, we cannot leave him out — contributed, in ways positive and negative, to make that edifice of philosophy stand out clear and self-justifying. In order now to realize how truly this Wisdom of God is not an unmotived irruption into the older system, reversing it all as by a divine fiat, but the sequel and crown and proper solution of it, we must pick up some of the dropped and broken threads that in our progress hitherto have been discovered.

It will be recalled that there were such. In Ecclesiastes, especially, that keenest and most

searching philosophy of Wisdom, the discovery was made, as was in passing remarked, that the sage had reached one *impasse* of life where Wisdom herself, for all her honest venturesomeness of insight, was fairly baffled.[1] We will remember, too, how all the brave good cheer of his book could not make it wholly victorious, could not overcome that immense undertow, as it were a cosmic tide, of sad mystery and fate. Its cheer, whenever it confronted that enigma, was like what Tennyson describes of one whose sight is lost: who is kindly with his kind, who talks and jests and enters genially into the life of young and old, and yet all the while is conscious of a void which no companionship can fill.

> "He plays with threads, he beats his chair
> For pastime, dreaming of the sky;
> His inner day can never die,
> His night of loss is always there." [2]

Only, in Ecclesiastes the lack is of something not yet revealed; a lack which, though he sees and makes the best of it, still leaves us painfully aware that his Wisdom falls in an unfinal dispensation, an era of manhood life not fully illumined. Somehow, he cannot yet tell how, there is a barrier to overcome, a height to surmount, before the final

[1] See above, p. 203.

[2] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, cxvi.

table-land is reached, from whence, as we look around, the whole landscape of life lies in illuminate splendor, no rock or tree or river hidden, no vital element missing, and all in true perspective and proportion.

To be more specific: We recall how the great sombre void in Ecclesiastes' view of things reduced itself to an essential lack of outlook. He was hemmed in, could not see as it were over the margin, to know how it all came out to solution. The grand master-key of things was not yet found. "All this," he says, "have I tried by wisdom; I said, Oh, let me be wise — and it was far from me. Far off, that which is; and deep, deep — who shall find it?" Then by the side of this was the felt lack which haunted him all along, and which his brave endeavors to supply in this and that particular only accentuated the more: the elemental lack of surplusage, *yithrōn*. What profit hath man in all his labor; what overplus of energy hath nature in all its weary round; what residuum of progress, or improvement, or permanence, hath history to show, in an order of things wherein there is nothing new under the sun? The world, as he felt its movement, seemed to have used up all its troubled labor in just keeping alive till the next generation came

on; and so the ongoings of human things reduced themselves virtually to vanity, breath, or as an old teacher of mine used to express it, "a long-drawn sigh."

These two lacks in his world, the lack of *yithrōn* and the lack of eventual outlook, were in essence one and inseparable. Like Kipling's visionary lama, he felt himself and his kind bound to a huge cosmic wheel of being, wherein, so to say, there was just enough motive-power to make the machine go, and none to spare for productive work; just enough vitality for uses of this world of time and space, and nothing over. The laws of being which he and the sages had been at such pains to discover, laws Mosaic and cosmic, were merely laws, that was all; ordered modes of working. They had their appointed course and their end. They *could* bring about a recompense of reward or retribution, according as they were obeyed or transgressed; but this recompense was only a posting of the books, a kind of punctuation mark announcing that the end had come and the reckoning was complete. The law, as such, did not look beyond, nor contain any still forward impulse. In its final verdict of judgment it was simply turned back on itself. Even the Wisdom which was concerned to use the laws of

manhood sagaciously was at best only a philosophy of balance and equivalence: how to meet the world on such equal and adequate terms as not to let the labor and crookedness and oppression of the world be too much for you and draw you under. If when death comes you can balance up even, that is the self-measured extent of it.

Clearly, then, in a universe wherein is nothing but law, no matter how fine and accurate are its adjustments, there is in the end nothing more vital than a colossal machine, nature and man involved in the same vortex of revolution; a mill grinding out year by year, generation by generation, eon by eon, the same old grist. We might as well own it up. Ecclesiastes' question, on his scale and outlook of things, is a problem for all time. What profit, what excess and overflow of life, to justify all this tremendous outlay of toil and energy? It has become with him, it becomes with us all as soon as we realize it, a very poignant question, which our growing science only aggravates. The whole problem of life and immortality lies wrapped up in it, and stands or falls with it.

And yet, if Ecclesiastes had only known it, how near he was approaching to the solution! The fact that he could feel and define the lack was evidence that he was already getting above and beyond it;

was already emerging, so to say, on the solution side. A new foothold of energy was beginning to reveal its presence in his heart. The immense uprise of sympathy which we note in him, making him at times almost wish to die or never to have been, as he saw the routine and the sad futility of it all, is in itself an eloquent witness that the essence of the grand solution was stirring within him; was pressing onward to assert its presence, though he had not given it a name, or learned to count it among the active motives of life. Ecclesiastes was no cynic or cold-heart; he felt deeply for his nation and his kind; his heart ached and rejoiced with them. In this very fact the master-key lies very near at hand. Manhood is almost ready to lay hold on it and apply it to wisely ordered life. Why are men's eyes still so dim and holden?

The answer to this question comes to us as, in the light of to-day, we send our thoughts back over Ecclesiastes and the whole earlier range of Wisdom literature. For in this he is by no means unique. Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Apocryphal books are essentially, blindly at one. There is, common to them all, still another lack that we have to record: the lack of what may be called the outward life-current. Not yet has Wisdom learned, in utter abandon of faith and love, to

cast herself forth on her world. To do that would be just the overflow, the liberation of life to excess, the want of which has become so painful. There has always hitherto been, in man's approach to life, an *arrière pensée*, a kind of mental and spiritual reservation. He has not let himself go, has not launched himself out into space, so to say, bearing his whole weight on his ideal of good. All this rich body of aphorisms — look them through carefully, weigh them, and you will see — come back uniformly to a more or less refined self-regard. They constitute, if you please, a grand manual of self-culture, a system of vigilance and defence, and their aim is that, however it may be self-culture for an ultimate larger end. The prevailing manhood current hitherto has been inward; the self has been the centre of the system. To be sure, there have been constant prophecies of a freer ideal; the tender regard for the poor and the widow and the orphan and the oppressed, for instance, has always been in evidence, a pulsation to counteract the too insistent claims of self-interest. Motions of faith, too, of venture toward issues yet unknown, begin to appear: Ecclesiastes' counsels, for instance, to cast our bread upon the waters, giving a portion to seven, yes, to eight; but even this has an eye to eventual returns, it

is after all a faith that *we*, some time and somehow, shall profit the more thereby. The venture is set in the key not of self-forgetfulness but of business. But the event is on the way, the larger spirit of which these are preliminary foregleams.

The faith which bids men sow their seed morning and evening,[1] taking all chances, is born first, and is fluttering its wings for a trial flight, beginning to stir into a motive and active power of Wisdom; and so the outward impulse is breaking forth tentatively. But the love by which ideally faith works, the love which in its own abundance of outflow forgets all thought of or care for returns? Nay, we must await the next surge and uprise of the manhood spirit for that. We get a little pale sentiment toward it, perhaps, from Greek philosophy. Professor Cheyne adduces from Jesus Sirach "a few small but exquisite gems, especially the sayings on friendship," but has immediately to add, "counterbalanced, I admit, by those on the treatment of one's enemies." There is no largeness, no abandon in it; it is not like the mighty love of God. The grand outward current of creative love, grace, truth, the headlong impulse of good-will, unbounded and free, has not yet taken sovereign possession, is not yet the su-

[1] Cf. Ecclesiastes xi, 6.

preme motive power. Manhood must have the divine spirit without measure, and faith stronger than men's treachery, nay, stronger than death, for that.

Here I imagine I may seem to be getting my Wisdom literature into too rare and ethereal a medium; careering among the unattainable ideals, rather than treading firmly among practical principles of living. To speak of an outward current of love, which recks not of self and seems to transcend all rules and restraint, sounds fanciful, not to say wild and Quixotic. One doubts whether man is built for such an unpractical working impulse. We are so used to the thought of his mixing all sorts of folly with his wisdom that we have become content to let it be so; we assume, as did Job's friends, that our manhood must needs be alloyed with some hardening of depravity, in order that it may have a proper cutting edge for the management of practical affairs. But this we must note: our history of Wisdom, stage by stage, has been the progressive history of a rising spiritual ideal. Job's invincible integrity, Ecclesiastes' sad sense of a race's limitation, have been a witness to what the heart of man is capable of. They reveal a motion of eternity in the heart of noblest manhood, which impels men to live, as by native

heroism, for a high ideal, though it seems to close every self-serving or worldly prospect. And if Job and Ecclesiastes have reached so high a point, One shall in due time succeed them who stands on a summit still higher. The prophetic soul of manhood is waiting for one of our common race who has the faith and courage to make the supreme venture, to clarify the ideal and bear his whole weight upon it.

II

When that foretold Personage comes, how shall he lay hold on the concepts and analogies by which hitherto Wisdom has made its philosophy of life viable? What shall be the fundamental *pou sto*, on which the Wisdom of God shall base its beauty and power?

Let us not make light of the analogies, the concrete images, by which men hew their ideals to practical use. Let us not call their values small because these happen to be literary values. Think how immensely men have profited, through all the years, by imagining themselves as taking a journey, or fighting a battle, or following a shepherd, or entering a door, or eating bread, or quenching their thirst with water, or bearing a cross. Why, our whole inner life comes to expression not in

abstractions at all, but in figures. The language of analogy, the inquiry of an experience, What is it like? is fundamental not to the mashal merely, but to our spiritual nature. It inspires the editor of the Solomonic proverbs, in the rapture of his discovery of human endowments, to picture his victorious intellect as Our Lady Wisdom, almost a goddess, playing and sporting with the elements of life in the presence of God. It impels Job, in his bitter sense of wrong, to figure the malign forces of the universe as armed hosts combining to hurt him; a conception to which he gives utterance again and again, and which the Lord is at pains to correct by the sweet implication of His address from the whirlwind.

One of the most far-reaching of these analogical conceptions has come to light in Ecclesiastes. It is that figure in which, raising his imagination to cosmic dimensions, he has imaged life as a self-returning and self-contained circuit, with no increment of energy; as a vitality welling up to the brim with wisdom and knowledge and joy, but with no overflow. It is a sombre picture, on the whole, of a manhood "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined," in a law-enslaved existence. The vague sense of limitation has become a world pain.

Right at this point it is that the central concep-

tion of the new life and wisdom joins issue and supplies the lack. That is what our Lord's definition of his mission amounts to, though he makes the application not to cosmic conditions but to personal life. Seizing on that general self-seeking trend which has characterized the world mainly hitherto, he says that others have come, even at the expense and hurt and destruction of their fellows, to enrich and advantage themselves; and then in contrast to these says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." [1] Do not let the obscure translation dull the edge of this last word: it is περισσόν, literally, a superfluity, an overflow, of life. Here, then, is just the conception of spiritual surplusage of which Ecclesiastes felt the want. It is as if He would have the vital motive power of man liberated in excess; not using itself up with merely existing, however symmetrically, or in the orbit of its own gratification, but having a fund beyond what is needed for personal or earthly use, having life to spare and to lay out in works of love. Whether He associated this idea of His consciously with Ecclesiastes' conception or not, certainly this is the idea that more than any other controls His ministry of beneficence and wisdom. He

[1] John x, 10.

works it out in His own life; He labors in various applications to get men into the same attitude; to make them open the gateways of their being and let themselves go, as it were, in radiant, exuberant energy. Instead of asking, What profit? and waiting to reckon their income before their character can have free course, let them rather commit themselves to the venture of love and faith, and they will find that they are at one with the creative order of the universe. The true image of healthy life is overflow, exuberance. We will remember how likewise, by an object-lesson drawn from her own occupation, Jesus gave to the Woman of Samaria a truth in which this same essential figure is involved. "Whosoever drinketh of this water," He says to her, "shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." [1] Not a reservoir running dry or stagnating, but an active fountain, welling always and flowing forth; not a life returning on itself to appease an ever recurring thirst and ever using itself up again, but a wealth of vital motion from an unseen source, pouring itself royally outward, itself a transmitter of life, allaying

[1] John iv, 13, 14.

drought through the same current by which its own drought is allayed. A most impressive image this, when we think what has preceded it, and how opposite was the controlling concept and figure of the older times. And that this conception of overflow has become the determining idea, henceforth, of the new manhood fulness, forever contrasting new to old, we find expressed in St. Paul's later and more literal summary of things. "The first man Adam," he says, "was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a life-giving spirit." Like the world-filling life of God, man's life is to be henceforth a radiator of life. And the accordant figure that is used for the multitudinous life of the world, which henceforth is to take on progressively the order of the kingdom of heaven, is that of leaven, which, from each life-centre spreading, is to impart and impart until according to each one's potency the whole huge lump is leavened. Such is the key of figure and ideal, all vibrating with this thought of initiative and surplusage, which, through Him who is the wisdom of God and the power of God, is destined to dominate the heart of man. It is the culmination of the old, the supply of a lack long and elementally felt, yet also a wholly new and transforming thing.

With this liberation of vital energy in excess,

if we may so name this life of the spirit, comes also the outlook which Ecclesiastes so sadly missed and so heroically denied. Immortality is brought to light as well as life; is in fact a correlate of the life absolute and not dissociable from it. Only, it is not the kind of immortality which sets men to peering beyond the grave and trying to tell their fortunes; not the kind that is revealed by vaticination and clairvoyance. The old assertion of Ecclesiastes, which faces a permanent fact, still holds as true as ever, that "he hath put eternity in their heart; yet not so that man findeth out the work which God hath wrought, from the beginning, and to the end." The New Testament, indeed, says very little more about the life beyond the grave, and no more about the literal conditions of it, than does the Old Testament; nor does it do anything essential to clear up the physical mystery of death. Lazarus brings back no news of his four days' visit to the undiscovered land. That is not what a revelation of immortality means; and if that alone were revealed to man, or were named as a chief or even important thing to live for, manhood would be unspeakably the poorer and pettier. No more truly does this immortality come to light as a post-obituary existence of escape and rest, such as the Wisdom of

Solomon figured; as if manhood were eventually to be tapered down to occupying a pleasant room in Sheol, or a bed in Abraham's bosom.

Rather, we now have the data to give it a new name, and a wholly new, more spacious connotation. In fact, immortality is not what Wisdom has been struggling to discover at all; immortality, I mean, in the sense of soul surviving body. It is *resurrection*, an uprise to a higher stage and standard of being. This is what rose into view when the fulness of manhood came; and this is not a postponed thing, an eventual survival of material decay, but a present access and exuberance of life, so free and overflowing, and made of such permanent materials, that in its power death is abolished. I *am* the life, He said, not am going to have it; I am the resurrection and the life. So in such teaching the disciples were all the while walking in the scenery of immortality and learning its idiom, without knowing it; and when, on that last evening, they raised the question where the Master was going, He spoke very briefly of the many mansions fitted to them, as if it were a truth that they had known all along: "if it were *not* so," He said, "I would have told you."[1] Eternity, long pulsing in the heart and

[1] John xiv, 2.

making it beat on to noble works, has become the natural setting of true life, eternal life as the new idiom familiarly calls it. Such is the completed answer to Ecclesiastes' austere agnosticism regarding the future; and it is the very answer in the interest of which, though he surmised it but dimly if at all, he so sturdily rejected the idle dreams and speculations of his too shallow age. He was in the true succession of Wisdom; had left room, so to say, for this diffused radiance of immortal light, by his sane principle that life must be a character and not a dream. The most repressive word was also the kindest.

These are high themes to bring into this literature of Wisdom; higher or deeper cannot be conceived. But it was necessary, as I have said, in order to pick up the dropped and broken threads. Necessary, too, because our Wisdom has become a veritable philosophy, with a cosmic and eternal setting; has come in sight of that which is, and found its principle of growth and progress. It has got beyond its self-returning wheel of being, which yields no residuum; and by a kind of laboratory method, in the person of its highest representative, commits itself to a life which is essentially a freedom, a venture, a spirit of love and faith. Self-regard has passed into self-impartation; and this

supreme representative, in the faith that God is love indeed, and love creation's final law, is ordering life not on the theory of getting all you can, as if Wisdom were an affair of enriching yourself, nor on a theory of fair balance between work and wage, but, so to say, on an intrepid impulse of outgo without reference to income, as if all he were here for were to lavish his wealth of personality on the world and let that philosophy of life work as it will. This, in his presupposition, is the highest expression of that supreme character which the Wisdom of men has been dimly seeking for ages.

III

How now does Wisdom look, as projected on so vast a background and translated into such revolutionary terms? The homely body of mashals that we have considered has concerned itself with personal and parish affairs; with labor and everyday living and practical management; how, then, can these activities have fruitful relation with so tremendous an overflow of being? Can a man, can the Son of man, so launch his faith out into the ocean of personality, and still remain prudent, calculating, cool-headed, wise in his generation? He must surely compete with quite another atti-

tude of wisdom, and either outlast or go under. For practical work and ways, is he not a misfit?

Well, let us see how it works out into every-day terms. We have seen what Wisdom resolved itself into, as the sages set out to explore it, and especially as Ecclesiastes applied it to the affairs of a crooked world. With him, as we have seen, it has become a quasi-philosophy of mastership, management: how so to manage our world, with its complexities and perplexities, as to secure the most advantage, or profit, all round; or where it is unmanageable, how so to manage or bear ourselves as to get the most or miss the least out of the situation. I am trying to put the case in its most utilitarian phase. It is with the world of human relations that Wisdom has mainly to deal. With God and fate the way is a plain one of reverence and manful courage; but with human relations our philosophy complicates itself into the problem how in the wisest and surest way to manage our fellow-men, as they are stationed at our side or over us.

Various phases of useful culture have been inculcated and exploited, as the beginning of the Proverb-book pointed out. Let us recall the compendious list: wisdom, instruction, understanding, wise-dealing, righteousness, judgment, equity,

subtilty, knowledge, discretion, sound counsels; a noble, manly catalogue: all having that practical end in view, that we may meet and match our neighbor and our gainsaying world, not being worsted or shamed. All are good as far as they go. Yet also all have their limits of efficiency; for all run eventually against an irreducible residuum of froward resistance. The scorner and the perverse and the fool are still there; and the strong persecute the weak; and there are wicked to whom it befalleth according to the work of the righteous; and because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, just because a sinner may do evil a hundred times and survive it, therefore the heart of the sons of men within them is full-set to do evil. Your wise expedients, your subtilties and sage counsels, seem to have reached the point of exhaustion, and yet not to have attained their end, in large and prevailing way. Such is the world into which Ecclesiastes looks; a seemingly intractable world, which to all our wisdom responds only far enough to let us live, and that only at great outlay of labor and skill. Even where justice abounds, the venom of selfish wrong and base cunning and overreaching may yet more abound.

One expedient remains, like the last thing in the Pandora box. Suppose you try loving your

fellow-man. *Loving* him — loving that lawless, evil-hearted, degraded fellow? Yes; loving him. You surely cannot mean it; loving him, — why, there is no tinge of wisdom or management in that; that is simply fatuous. What defence have I left, if I do? See how instantly he will turn upon my guilelessness, and make traffic of my trust in him, and take his easy advantage, and indulge his perverse triumph to the utmost. Well, what if he does? But what more complete playing into his hands could there be? Why, it is as much as my life is worth, to say nothing of my common sense, to abandon myself thus to a wild, Quixotic impulse of sheer good-will. Well, what if it is? But, where do *I* come in? what is there in this deal for me? For you? — why, what are you looking for anything for? Ah, I begin to see; you are still in this wisdom of life for the sake of returns, are you? You must still, after however long or deep-laid circuit of wisdom, come back to Satan's question of net proceeds, must you? But — but — why, this is an utter reversal of tactics: it is as if I, who had spent life and study fortifying my soul against the hardness and shrewdness of men, constructing walls and earth-works and rifle-pits and subterranean mines, should all of a sudden throw the gates open and make a sortie to the open plain, leaving

everything open to invasion. Yes, it does look so, does it not? And that is exactly what it amounts to. It *is* the complete reversal of the tidal currents of life, the outward current we are speaking of, the overflow and free uprise of spirit, as set in motion in the heart of man. It is, in fact, a reversal of manhood life so radical that Jesus calls it being born anew, and says that one so born is as free and as inexplicable to worldly estimates of values as the wind. In a word, the hitherto accepted wisdom of life is working in just the opposite direction, and man is committed to the issue of a deal which does not limit itself by the question of value received at all. The dependence on rules and counsels of procedure has given place to a self-moved character so imbued with neighbor-love and so set on neighbor-welfare as to devise a rule of action and wisdom all its own.

And what comes of it? What *would* come of a life so original and initiative? It looks inoffensive, but it is revolutionary; it shows too bright on the background of men's selfishness to make its way undisturbed, or to remain inoperative. Men must take positions with reference to it; for or against; and their positions must not only be taken determinately but emphasized. "The wisdom of Plato had already seen that one perfectly just could

not appear amongst the senseless and the wicked without provoking a murderous hatred." And the wisdom of St. Paul notes, in like manner, that a similar reception was given to the One perfectly wise, who dared to push his Wisdom of God to its consequences. It was a stumbling-block to the Jews, the seekers after signs of truth, and to the Greeks, the philosophical successors of Plato, it was foolishness. Obviously, if it would prevail among men, it must be larger and more vital than the immediate occasion or the superficial effect; it must have the strength to outlast and the faith to go on till it accomplishes some larger and more far-reaching result. Such must be the marks of the Wisdom of God.

So here we must sketch a little history of the introduction of this Wisdom. When the fulness of the time came, one man, who by that act consciously presented himself for the world's judgment as Son of man, that is, as type of full manhood, committed himself, in filial faith and with no shadow of reserve, to that tide of Father-love which from the unseen sources flows through the universe; committed himself not merely by accepting such love and profiting by it, which was passive and easy, but by exerting it consistently in conduct, which is quite another matter. To be utterly true

to that apprehended love of God and to make it prevail as human hands and brain could be its vehicle, this was the single-minded activity to which his life was consecrated. Such consecration, mystic and fervid as it was, drew to a practical aim and centre. It was as religious as was the life of Job, yet at the same time as wisely set on the adaptation of means to ends as were the counsels of Ecclesiastes. The problem of religion is to find God. The problem of Wisdom is to find men; and this supreme aim is what makes the life of Jesus an authentic chapter in the history of purest Wisdom.

In so doing, not blindly but as knowing what is in man, he deliberately brought upon himself all the consequences, immediate and remote, of such committal. Was this determination made in weakness or in strength, in fatuity or in wisdom? — men have been asking ever since, and answering according to what was in them. If in wisdom, there certainly was in that wisdom a controlling element more than worldly. Professor Toy, in his summary of the character qualities inculcated in the Book of Proverbs, mentions as a conspicuous omission, courage. I think the omission is supplied here, in a courage which expresses itself not in counsels but in living

consistency. We know what was the immediate result of Jesus' committal to the life of love. They did to him even as worldly wisdom predicted. They took mean advantage, they lied about him, they consulted their policies and expediencies to get rid of him, they clamored against his revolutionary tendencies, they put him to death. All this he might have avoided; our old accuser Satan gave him the chance to do so, and to get the kingdoms of the earth in the bargain. Such personality as his, even a Satanic eye must see, had transcendent powers of management and leadership. And he — not for one moment did he deflect his way, or stop loving his fellow-men. The fountain of his love remained constant, and with his last breath was still flowing, as it were an eternal ordinance of nature. And this indeed is what he proved it to be; as expressed in nature's highest product, the fully evolved manhood. We call it the divine acting on our clay, and so it is; but surely it acts from within; it is no less accurately, in concrete historical fact, what the human is capable of being.

We may here note how a deep student of inner history, he whom we call St. John, has interpreted all this, as compared with the older standards of living. "The law," he says, "was given

by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Grace — do we not see this is just the thing we have been describing? Grace may be defined as love in a certain supreme aspect; that is to say, love without reference to returns, love initiative, exerted not because its object is lovely or worthy, or has done anything to call it forth, but because the real nature and integrity of love is originative, an overflow, as it were the primal impulse of highest character. This, when we come to think of it, is a true definition; the only one in which personality attains its freest and fullest expression. To make love less than this is to make it an echo of something else, or as dependent on something else. But in all the universe, as Jesus believes and puts it into life, love is the supreme uncreated thing. And this too, as St. John's statement intimates, is also truth, that rounded integrity and consistency which best answers to man's birth and ultimate type. Truth is grace loyal to itself, grace maintaining itself as the mark of the perfected personality, above whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie, be it wickedness or mere expediency or opportunism or any of the shifts of worldly wisdom. And Jesus is committed, for better or for worse, to the proposition that such supreme truth of manhood lies

not in merely obeying natural or moral law, but in freely imparting itself.

But that a grace so yielding, so unexacting, so unchanged by any return it elicits — that this should be wisdom, as it were an applied art of love? This is the question that our present theme lays upon us.

Well, here is what actually took place. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; was not worn out by frowardness, but outlasted it and remained absolutely intact, a new power in the world. And the men who put Jesus to death, when they came to the better self that was struggling for its rights within them, began to respond to it, and to number the years of their history from his birth, and to realize that for all its Quixotic abandon it was an immense quickener of highest and noblest things. In the long run it proved itself, after all, adapted to find men and win them; and so it was a real philosophy of management, the only infallible one. Say what we may, that grace has changed the tone and face of the world. The tides of our civilization and intelligence and dealing with men have been trying ever since, though so haltingly and so subject to faithless cross-currents, to conform themselves to the mighty current of it.

And as for the law, it was equally the fulfilling of that; so that the law of our being got itself observed, in spirit and essence, as never before. In fine, this grace, which did not pause for the cross, turned out to be the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Or, as we have traced it from that elemental surplusage and overflow, and compared it with our conception of the divine, it has proved itself the wisdom of God and the power of God. The Son of man had rejected an existing decrepit dominion in order to create, on an eternal scale, a new and living one, which should call forth a glad, free allegiance of hearts. "I," he said, "if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."[1] No Promethean remonstrance of a Job against a felt injustice in things, or of an Ecclesiastes against a splendid but empty dream of the future, can compare with the sublime courage of such a committal as this. It has the authentic stamp of the heroic; nay, it is the actual historic realization of that poet's dream of "music sent up to God," which in very truth is

"The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky."

[1] John xii, 32.

Jesus, as it were, improvises the theme, which then is left for common men, workers and martyrs, to embody in daily living.

IV

Yet all this new tide of living wisdom, radical and revolutionary though it was, came not with observation. Nothing could exceed the simplicity and familiarity of it. In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, a young man left his carpenter-shop at Nazareth, and coming to the Jordan began to gather young men about him, fishers' sons and publicans and common folk, and to tell them his thoughts of life. That these would be thoughts well worth pondering we might be sure before we heard him; for we have just been behind the scenes and know the marvellous principle of life to which he is committed. In fact, a whole world philosophy lies wrapped up in the situation; which, however, we must leave aside, while we confine ourselves to the current of practical wisdom that flowed through his words. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" people began to ask regarding him; and there was an authority in his teaching, the authority of perfect sanity and sound sense, which everywhere excited wonder.

Of the form of his teaching, which was as wisely adapted to men as the substance, we have space for only a brief description. It was not written wisdom, with its literary refinements and posturings; it was not declamatory and oratorical; nor was it chiseled and filed into the artistic aphorism of the early mashal. To put his utterances into parallelisms, as some affect to do nowadays, as if they were a kind of poetry, is, I think, to import into them a feeling of remoteness and finish which they were not intended to bear, however our meditation may derive this quality from them. No more were they in the academic and erudite tone so affected by the scribes, a quality that doubtless did much to rob their words of that kind of impact and thrust which carries authority. His teaching had, in fact, risen beyond the halfway point where its art sticks out and obtrudes itself as art, and by making men forget all this, demonstrated all the more truly its transcendent artistry. It was conversational, familiar, idiomatic, drawing its figures and analogies from the commonest things, yet by the inner value of the subject rising to a quiet assurance of grandeur.

To the disciples, who were constantly with him, he presented the truth more literally and in closer words. They could make the connections and

coördinations with his other utterances; could better resolve a partial view or a half-truth, having the larger body of doctrine to refer it to. To the floating multitude, some of whom may never have heard him before, and many of whom may have had to depend for their instruction on that one hearing, he spoke largely in parables. By this means he showed a divine sense of fitness both to subject and audience. Thus there were the literary forms which would deepen thought in those whose thoughts were already germinating and expanding; and there were the forms which would awaken and stimulate thought in those whose ideas hitherto had been heedless or uncentred. Both classes received their proper food.

> "For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,
> Where truth in closest words shall fail,
> When truth embodied in a tale
> Shall enter in at lowly doors." [1]

For the rest, his parables, which were a conversational expansion of the illustrative mashal, like a detailed simile, were not only admirably adapted to "enter in at lowly doors;" they were designed also, as he intimated, to be a kind of combination lock, which they must have the right spiritual combination to open; innocuous and stimulative, even if not fully fathomed, and increasing in sig-

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, xxxvi.

nificance, beauty, and wisdom, the farther and more sympathetically they were explored. Of untold value to those in whose hearts they were lodged as seed thoughts, to the shallow and worldly they could speak warningly, as did Browning of his privately guarded House: —

> "Outside should suffice for evidence:
> And whoso desires to penetrate
> Deeper, must dive by the spirit sense —
> No optics like yours, at any rate!" [1]

The parables can be explored; but they cannot be profaned.

For the substance of his Wisdom, we must need content ourselves, in so infinitely rich a field, with a few broad vistas and directions. It is just the consistent tissue of the wisdom whose supreme pulsation is love: the wisdom which, putting utter faith in the power of love, will by love find the hearts of men, or, failing this, will still live in its stedfast character of love, and bear witness to it through all storms of opposition, indifference, hatred, contempt, never ceasing to love even for death. It is thus the epitome of His own nature which He would impress upon men; He is working His own life out into precept and parable.

His body of precept, the more esoteric coun-

[1] Browning, *House*.

sel which He gives to His disciples, is directed in its most distinctive ways to getting an initiative started, a venture of love, in the heart and conduct of man. He approaches this idea in a naïve, homely way, trying to make men ignore their old commercial impulses and take pride and joy in doing something over, something that they are not paid for, something which can be put to the credit of the free-moving spirit. "If ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye?"[1] Sinners, he says, do as much as that; sinners love those who love them. To go so far and no farther, in your outflow of life, is just to balance things up accurately: action and reaction, favor and reward, love answering to love, and perhaps hate to hate. But there is no "thank" in living that way, none of the blessedness of free giving, nothing more than is paid for. Life is at a deadlock so far as spiritual progress is concerned if it gets no farther than that. We see how this attacks the inveterate old idea of doing good and getting a reward for it, and how it corrects this idea by the simple idea of overflow. Long enough have men echoed each other, doing as they were done by, and measuring out their treatment of each other by the treatment they

[1] Luke vi, 33.

received. Long enough have they been in the world like children and slaves, obeying law because they must obey, and only as far as they must; long enough have they been passive instruments of His sovereign power, the puppets and culprits of God. It is time now to be His sons, reproducing the family traits and likeness; to be to the world each one an individual pulsation of God, perfect in human degree as He in His. And the divine trait that Jesus selects for emulation is just that love which, without respect of persons, works equal good to all; which sends rain and sunshine on evil and good, on just and unjust, alike. There is the pattern. It is not the worthiness of the object that is to determine a true man's conduct: not what he is to get, not even the gratitude or appreciation he is to get, for being good or loving. All this would make him only an echo of another, helpless and dependent; incapable of having good-will until the other has good-will too; and there is no "thank" in that, it is still on the same old plane of barter and exchange. No: it is rather the overflow, the self-moved initiative, of the character that is full formed within us. This determines Christ's new principle of action and wisdom, and this is what an apostle calls the law of the spirit of life.

It is when our Lord is setting forth this idea in all its startling absoluteness that his words sound most like half-truths. We may fairly say they *had* to come as half-truths, they were so new and strange to the natural heart of man. They are strange still until they are interpreted in the spirit. They seem, in some aspects, like an utter collapse of weakness, while in fact they are the summit of integrity and strength. There is, for instance, that seemingly Quixotic group of precepts, to turn the other cheek to your smiter, to go two miles with him who compels you to go one, and to give your coat also to him who takes your cloak. Men read this in their worldly light as if it were a cowardly non-resistance; as if the Christian were expected to be a weakling, everlastingly giving up and knuckling under. And men pride themselves on the greater strength which is ready to give as good as it gets; they say you cannot preserve your practical position or your self-respect by letting yourself be so run over. And if they will stop to think what this means, they will find that they themselves are the weaklings. "It is true," says Mr. Chesterton, "that we cannot turn the cheek to the smiter, and the sole and sufficient reason is that we have not the pluck."[1] Is it weakness,

[1] Chesterton, *Varied Types*, p. 134.

is it cowardice, to have such stamina and solid constancy of character that nothing can make you a mere echo, to smite or use compulsion or extort, or on the other hand to love and do good just as some one else sets the copy? Must you go through life able to do nothing but retaliate? Why, then, your character, your individuality, is unformed; you are at the mercy of your environment. On the other hand, your ability to turn the other cheek means that after the smiting and injustice you remain the same man you were before: freely determining what you do, going the second mile and giving the coat, because such good-will remains as truly in you as it ever was. Such is the character that survives; it is elemental; evil environment cannot kill or impair it. It works as consistently on the small scale as on the large. A half-truth this is, indeed; but the other half, supplied by the spirit of love, foots back to that new self-effacing wisdom which through this young man of Nazareth is feeling for a foundation here in the world.

Of the same character are those precepts wherein our Lord stimulates men, appealing to their pride and generosity, to go beyond the Golden Rule. To do to others as you would that others should do to you is a noble principle; no justice could

demand a nobler. And yet there is in it, as there is in justice itself, a note of limitation. It is good deeds put forth in faith, and it sets a generous copy of what it would elicit in return; but still its eye is on the return; it does its good on the reciprocating plan. Now, noble as this is, our Lord, by the grand ideal of his own life, and by the inner principle that he would have his disciples live by, took the further step of doing good and loving without limitation. We speak of loving our neighbor as ourself; and while this is the noble ideal of the law, the old ideal, some have held that the Christian addition to this calls us to love our neighbor better than ourself. No: that is not how Jesus read it. Rather, love your neighbor without reference to yourself at all; love him with no standard, or limit, smaller or larger, short of the all-creative love of God. We have seen how, in the practical treatment of the neighbor at our side, he would stimulate men to do something which sinners could not do just as well, something more than they are paid for or expect pay for. And on the top of this precept, which amounts to a criticism of the Golden Rule, he goes on till he arrives at this: Love your enemies; do good to them that hate and persecute you. This it is, nothing short of this, to be not like sinners, who

helplessly take their standard and occasion from each other, but like God, whose sun rises every morning on just and unjust, who with undiminished beneficence, whatever evil or indifference He shines upon, "makes Himself an awful rose of dawn, unheeded."

It has always seemed to the world that we are in rarefied air here; and we are. Is it *too* high and rarefied to be practical, to be wisdom? Well, we have the every-day life of Jesus to answer that. He knew that he was going far, nay, to the uttermost; but it was all consciously dedicated to the proposition that such self-effacing love is practical wisdom. And while he gives men the Golden Rule as a solid landing-stage on the way thereto, — the highest indeed that can justly be commanded, — standing on the farther side, and on the heights above it, he asks men almost wistfully if they also can drink his cup and be baptized with his baptism. The ultimate Wisdom, to which he was committed, is a thing beyond laws, rules, commandments; it is the pulsation of the free, enlightened spirit.

We can see now how truly this is a reversal of the currents of life. By it manhood, hitherto passive, acted upon, has become active, initiative; the current is outward, not inward flowing. And in becoming such, it has become identified with

the Source of all wisdom and power, with the creative upbuilding tide of the universe; having His cause at heart, and vibrating in the chord of His will. And so it has risen above the animal, which is an embodied hunger, seeking its meat from God; above the worldling, who is an embodied craving, seeking his wage and meed among material and present things; to the summit where, as a leavening influence among men, it is making love and righteousness prevail, a positive, working, creative superabundance of power. It is Rabbi Ben Ezra's vision made actual: —

> "Rejoice we are allied
> To that which doth provide
> And not partake, effect and not receive!
> A spark disturbs our clod;
> Nearer we hold of God
> Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe!" [1]

As men reflect such ideal, they are centres of a hidden wisdom; they are, according to Christ's familiar figures, the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

So much for his more inward and what I call esoteric precept, which he gives to his intimate followers. The parables enter a field more like what men have hitherto occupied; the field where our work and livelihood must come in close touch

[1] Browning, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, v.

with affairs. He has not forgotten the needs of this sphere, and his words ray light into it, as into every sphere; though not so much by way of rules and working aphorisms; rather by putting into the place of these a self-moved character which makes its own rules, and by launching all on the new tide of things. He shuns not to bid his disciples be wise as serpents, even while in all their activities they are to be as harmless as doves.

So he is by no means afraid of using what is usable in the older and more self-regarding standards of men. Like the law, these are not to pass away until all that is good in them is secured. A good instance of this is the parable of the Unjust Steward.[1] Let us not miss the lesson of this parable by the fact that in it the unjust remains unjust still; for honesty and dishonesty are not its issue. The point is that even a worldly scheming man may have the good trait of looking out for the future by making friends and helpers, even though it be friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. The unrighteous mammon, because it exists, has a utility, a turn to serve; it may better be for us than against us, quite apart from our being smirched by it; it is our drill-

[1] Luke xvi, 1–13.

ground and opportunity, an arena wherein to develop trustiness for the care of the true riches. It need not warp the new man from his truer orbit to know that such shrewd foresight may be coupled with faithlessness. Planning for future emergencies can just as well form other and righteous combinations; and in this kind of foresight the children of this world are wiser than, or as we familiarly express it, can give pointers to, the children of light. We know how men conciliate each other in the way of business; how, for the sake of enhancing their gains, they go through all the motions of neighborly good-will. Well, this parable is founded on that trait of business tactics, and works to make it not mere part-acting but genuine.

Other parables there are, too, which bring us close to practical affairs of work and business; yet which, as soon as we have the Christ combination to unlock them, open to us all the riches of the spirit. The parable of the Talents,[1] for instance, interprets life by entering the field of commercial enterprise; it defines life in terms of trade. The spirit on which it sets its approval is the spirit of faith, which ventures, which embarks energies and capacities on an issue as yet

[1] Matthew xxv, 14–30.

uncertain; has faith, so to say, that there is a reward and blessedness in the universe, to answer to all that we lay out upon it. The kingdom of heaven, our Lord says, is like that; it has, so to say, a soul that responds to just that impulse in man which seeks gain and merit and reward; and the spirit which man brings to his side of the case is the spirit of wise, honest, faithful stewardship of a property which is both God's and our own. This statement of the case puts all our possessions, material as well as spiritual, in their true place and relation; get the spirit right once, and the rest follows; but the point is that instead of inveighing against the business of accumulating wealth, as it is so easy to do, Jesus uses that very business as a definition and illustration of the highest life a man can live. Not to have such faith as expresses itself in business ventures is to abjure a wholesome impulse of manhood. This is seen in the contrast of the parable, the man of one talent; who is condemned not for his small endowment, but for his refusal to avail himself of what his universe is ready even on the lowest terms to yield. To him corporations have no souls; capital is a selfish, austere thing, reaping where it has not sown, and gathering where it has not strewed. His relation to the king-

dom is not that of soul and faith and stewardship; his spirit does not lay hold of his world, but dwells shut up in its own selfish interests. But even so, a lower outlet to life is in measure provided. Suppose the universe in which your lot is laid *were* hard and soulless. It has other ways of responding to you. If you cannot let your soul meet the soul of enterprise and growing wealth, in the energetic terms of work and faith, you could at least be a passive investor, could let money breed interest, for so it may be appointed to just such as you. To live on the interest of your money, or by the occupation of owning real estate, is not the highest calling in life; it requires only one talent to do that. But if you have so little stir of faith in your world as to hide even that talent, — well, your fitting place is evidently somewhere out of the world.

One more instance, the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard,[1] lets in a beam of the newer wisdom to what is called the labor problem. Things are strangely reversed in this parable: on the one side, laborers going into their life's work, whether through the hours of heat and burden or at the last hour of the afternoon, because they want to work, and with a faith in their employer which

[1] Matthew xx, 1–16.

does not stipulate wages but simply accepts the promise of "whatsoever is right;" on the other side, an employer apparently quite careless of his fund for running the business, less concerned to get work done than to get men to do it, and giving equal wages for short hours. There is an audacity of conception about the whole matter which somehow rouses admiration. As was said of the charge at Balaclava, "It is magnificent, but it is not war;" so here we say, It is magnificent, but it is not business. But when, after a little, our thoughts settle and run clear, we begin to ask ourselves: So much the worse for it, or so much the worse for business? After all, must business, employment, work and wage, needs be like war? And when we realize that in the supreme employment bureau of the universe the proprietor is running his business on a plan quite other than the amount of work, that is, the number of hours, that He can get out of his workingmen; and that He opens to men a chance to work on a plan quite other than the amount of pay they can get out of Him, — well, somehow a higher equilibrium seems to have been established. We experience a real stimulus and uplift of character from the thought that the kingdom of heaven is like that, and that our deeper and central life may be shaped to such

a scheme of things, whether the temporal firm for which we work and the union to which we belong can be like it or not. It opens the soul to larger things, to a permanent order. There is surely wisdom here, the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes and capitalists of this world knew.

This last cited parable, we will remember, was called forth by that perennial question of reward. We may be sure that would sooner or later come to the surface; and indeed its relation to the Wisdom of God calls for clear adjustment. Our Lord had been describing how hard it was for a rich man to enter into the kingdom; and Peter had thereupon responded, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" The answer to this question, put into the idiom that Peter could understand, the idiom of his inquiry, was, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold — yes, and the blessedness of persecutions extra — and

shall inherit everlasting life." [1] But, He goes on virtually to say, there are rewards *and* rewards. The reward of exerting positive beneficent power and of judging life as it most divinely is, is just as real as the reward of earning a fortune or drawing a salary; and this is what you may surely count upon. This is the grand reversal of values to which you must adjust your life. And then He gives the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard to illustrate in what way the first shall be last and the last first. Ruskin caught the inner principle of it and tried to infuse something of its spirit into political economy by writing a book entitled "Unto this Last," and founding his idea of practical life upon it — "I will give unto this last even as unto thee." It is our Lord's profounder ratification of what Ecclesiastes had already recognized: that the life itself, with all its renunciations and acquisitions, is its own reward; that life, the ultimate fact, with its own eternal values, cannot be exchanged for anything else. When Ecclesiastes made that discovery, it was made to stay. But with our Lord life was committed to the overflowing current of grace and truth; its wisdom was the tactful and winning wisdom of love and the patient wisdom of faith;

[1] Mark x, 29, 30.

and its reward was the far reward of seeing His faith prevail and the needy earth enriched with the wealth of responsive souls. That made the difference.

When prophecy spoke its final word, in the person of John the Baptist, there was an estranging feature about the man and the message which compelled men to take his word, if they accepted it at all, in the congenial spirit of it, and in faith. "If ye will receive it," said our Lord of him, "this is Elijah, which was for to come." It was truly fulfilled when it was fulfilled within. When the law received restatement at our Lord's hands, it became a new and vital thing, positive instead of negative, its "Thou shalt not harm" reversed to "Thou shalt love;" and in this restatement all the burden and bondage of law disappeared in fulfilment, glorified into the divine law of universal being. Of wisdom too, as of these others, when it came in the self-evidencing authority of Jesus and not as the scribes, we may say, If ye will receive it, this is the hidden wisdom, the Wisdom of God. But now as always there is the second and estranging element, the receiving of it, to be reckoned with. "*Can* ye drink of my cup, — and be baptized with my baptism?" Its first great effect was

to cause a whole nation to stumble, because they could not discern in it the signs of workableness and prosperity. And to those who were wise in their own eyes, or by the calculable and reasonable standard, is has seemed foolishness. The spirit to receive it must be a venturing spirit, reaching beyond effects that can be seen or that are immediate, toward an event which it takes an eternal future to complete. It must be a constructive spirit, putting faith in the most unpromising human nature for the sake of what it may become. It must be a courageous spirit, committing itself to what the acceptance of wisdom costs, as well as to what it comes to. It cost Jesus His life. But that same life, risen again and infused as a supreme spirit of wisdom into the hearts of men, is the one hope, the one health, and salvation of the world. Nor this merely in the devotional and sacred currents of living. As the ages go on they will see more clearly, as they are so slowly beginning to see, that men's cleverest and most sagacious enterprises, their business affairs, their civilizations, their hope of bettering conditions of mankind, cannot emancipate themselves from a virtual treadmill of existence, with its gyrating cycles of surmise and experiment and error, into real manhood progress, except

by this selfsame vitality of love and faith. It will take men a good while to learn that this Wisdom of God is a practical, workable wisdom, in such wise as to build the idea into the sturdy truth of manhood; but it is worth all the enthusiasm and sacrifice that Jesus of Nazareth wrought into it, for it is the permanent hope of the world.

VIII

AS BETWEEN BROTHERS

THE LIGHT TEMPERED TO COMMON EYES

I. The brother of the Lord as brother of men.

II. The new patent of nobility.

III. Summary of the Wisdom which is from above.

VIII

AS BETWEEN BROTHERS

IN the general growth of the Wisdom literature, fundamentally the literature of common sense in an uncommon degree, we have to take note of a tendency against which it had continually to strive: the tendency, namely, to run ahead of men's every-day ideas and interests, and get into an ethereal region above the brown earth, where the mind of the plain man cannot easily feel at home. I do not name this as by any means an evil tendency; nor does the movement against it connote any attitude of hostility or disparagement. Rather it was felt as a tendency requiring correction and caution; and so, along with the impulse of Wisdom to soar there always coexisted a wholesome effort to keep its high involvements in such plain sight, and so clearly identified with men's straight instincts, that the rank and file, for whom Wisdom primarily existed, could at every step use and understand it.

A mere touch of review will show what I mean. As soon, we will remember, as men's enthusiasm and imagination became enlisted in the con-

templation of Wisdom, as we see in the editorial section of Proverbs, Wisdom assumed a radiant guise of personification, like a kind of goddess, sporting in the heavenly courts and having her delights with the sons of men. This was all well enough, so long as the bounds of the figurative and the literal were kept clearly discerned. But we recall how at about this juncture, whatever his specific occasion, the staunch old Philistine Agur felt called upon to insinuate a kind of makeweight hint, a gentle caution against too adventurous speculation on the divine nature, and too superfine fancies about poverty and riches. His words read, in effect, like the plain man's protest against making the wisdom of life a merely learned and literary thing, remote and unpractical, and thus missing the grip it ought to have on unlettered men's interests. This gentle reaction of Agur's was much like what, on a larger scale, sanity and sound sense was moved to administer at the great crises of the Wisdom history. It insisted, in the person of Job and against the too Calvinistic friends, on a God whom an honest and merciful man could respect. It insisted, in the old-fogy remonstrances of Ecclesiastes, and against the self-pleasing speculations of his time, on rejecting an immortality that was all dreams and no

character. Yet these negations did not hinder the growth of a large philosophy of life, or work to make it less profound. They clarified it rather, and gave it freer, more universal course. All the while the great ideas of life, ideas of God, of immortality, of the essential principles of being, were orbing into sane expression and taking on the natural color; proving themselves capable of thriving as well among the common folk as among sages and poets and scholars, and of having as much beauty in homely parables and Poor Richard maxims as in the splendor of descriptive imagery. The tendencies to the academic and esoteric were kept wisely within bounds; and most truly of all in the words of Him who "taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes." His wisdom, highest of all, was also the simplest and yet the most intimately enmeshed with life.

But it was also the Wisdom of God, which none of the princes of this world knew. It laid hold, as no wisdom had done before, on the spiritual centres of being. The Word of God, men came to call it; the Word made flesh; as it were the greatest Idea in the world spelled in the letters of concrete human life. Wisdom had become not merely a thing to know, but a thing to be. And now to get a great idea sown like living seed into the hearts

and actions of men, so that it may be vital in their daily affairs, — does it not require some translation and applied statement? Does it not indeed require more in proportion to the very majesty of it? So we have already seen, in the years before Christ, when Wisdom passed from its great rough-hewn thoughts into the making of many books; so we may naturally expect again.

As Jesus walked with men, going on, though in the ways of their own wisest conduct, to the deeper involvements, the more rarefied air, of his redemptive and Messianic work, we may well imagine that men felt a sense of distance widening between him and them; just as the disciples, when they saw him going before them to Jerusalem and Calvary, were amazed. Wisdom has indeed dealt with mortal powers, in life and word and far-reaching image; it has taken love and faith and shaped them into a strong and tactful art; but it is so limitless, goes on to such an ocean of overflowing life, that common men, then as indeed ever since, may well have been

> "dazed, as one who wakes
> Half-blinded at the coming of a light," [1]

and still have said, with Ecclesiastes, though in the bewilderment of rapture, "Far off, that which

[1] Tennyson, *The Coming of Arthur.*

is; and deep, deep, — who shall find it?" or with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it." As a matter of fact, men have not learned, even yet, how to love their enemies, or how in Christlikeness to live and let live. They have not the courage to go on being themselves, in unretaliating integrity, when their cheek is smitten or their dignity is invaded. They still think it a necessity to be more or less depraved and sinful, in a gainsaying world, because forsooth Adam supposedly made them so; rather than to be perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. A great deal, a very great deal, of the Wisdom of God, is heedlessly suffered to be a dead letter. Men think perhaps that they must postpone it to a future state of existence, where they will have no evil body or evil world to bother them, and where, when they can put it off no longer, they will have to be good. They call themselves Christian; but their Christianity is very imperfectly developed to a self-consistent wisdom; and it still remains true, as when our Lord said it, that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.

I

Perhaps this is why, in the providing care of the Author of revelation, the Epistle of James is added, as a New Testament contribution, to the body of Wisdom literature. The light must needs be tempered, perhaps, and reflected upon our lowly neighborhood and parish affairs, in order that we may move more at home in it, realizing how truly it is the light of common day. The Epistle of James: — not a treatise this time, nor tragic story, nor anthology of maxims, but just a familiar circular letter, as from friend to a circle of friends; not addressed to "my son," as if it would perpetuate the superior relation of sage to disciple, but to "my brethren," as if it would impart comrade shares in all. But with all this least exacting of forms and tone, the Epistle of James is an authentic book of Wisdom, worthy of a high place in the list. Nor is it by any accommodation of terms or deflection of meaning that we count it in the same essential Wisdom strain as Proverbs and Job and the rest. We may call it the book which domesticates the common sense of the new attitude to life in its natural home, the heart of the common man. There is nothing imposing or sweetly literary about it; and so little theology of justification

by faith and the other big doctrines that Martin Luther called it "an epistle of straw." Let us not, however, mind what Luther says, but look at it for ourselves. We know what it was that biassed his judgment. He lived in a time when one great error and evil loomed up before him, filling his horizon full; and the truth that appealed to him was the truth that nucleated round one great, needful, immediate remedy. His mind was fairly liberal, but it was not in attitude to go far afield for general religious or every-day culture. This epistle it was, in the generous field of scripture truth, which touched the blind spot in his eye.

The thing which gives the book dominant interest for us, an interest indeed which works in untold suggestiveness as soon as we get it into our heart and imagination, is the fact — I think, with the carefulest scholars we may squarely take it as fact — that the James who wrote it was the brother of our Lord. In noting what the book contains, its general tone, and the soul of Wisdom it embodies, I do not propose, of course, to make its value depend on this assumed fact; and apart from this, the book is a richly rewarding study on its own account, and on account of its relation to the course of Wisdom literature which it supplements and finishes. But it pays us equally

well to coördinate the book with what this view of its authorship suggests. It is eminently in character: written as we should expect an actual brother of our Lord, placed in a position where like his elder and greater brother he is endeavoring to be the brother of every man, to write. There is no other book of scripture which in so honest and natural way echoes the sane spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and the parables as does this; extracting, so to say, the Wisdom essence of these ideals of life, and giving them reasonableness and currency among common men.

If this was so, between the lines of this book we get some glimpse of the heritage of life and thought possessed in a Galilean village of Jesus' time; the common life and common thinking which had become a kind of cultural atmosphere, as the word of prophets and lawgivers, the songs of psalmists, and counsel of sages, talked over and pondered, had wrought to make men sensible and straight-seeing. Let us not mind what the scribes and Pharisees at Jerusalem thought of these Galileans. They were concerned, as we know, with the frills and minutiæ of their law and literature; and here in Galilee, among the less refined and sophisticated, we are likelier, after all, to find the real core of the matter. Up here in Galilee

men were remote from the capital, with its hierarchy and temple service; in the pure air of the hills and the country, where the solemn pottering of scribism and rabbinism did not count. Their religious forms were the simple order of a village synagogue. From this, from that studying of scripture wherein every one was at liberty to read and expound, they got their education. That this education amounted to much more than the doctors at Jerusalem would give them credit for, we are not left to conjecture; we know from many touches of result. When Titus with his armies was on his way to besiege Jerusalem, and had reached Galilee, he was astonished, it is said, to find that any ordinary laborer or servant-girl could give intelligent account of the nation's customs and ideals and history; a remarkable contrast, for general dissemination of ideals, to his own or any other nation on earth. An evidence of the same thing is furnished in the young men who went to the Jordan to hear John, and came to Jesus saying, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" and afterward accompanied Jesus from place to place, curious to know and learn of his new teaching. Pure-minded and ingenuous young men these, who in their own way were idealists and thinkers. True, they had feelings of rivalry be-

tween villages; and Nathanael, down there in Bethsaida by the lake, was inclined to doubt if any good thing could come out of Nazareth; but when they came to compare views, they found they were a good deal alike. All were students of life; ideas had entered into their daily work and were making them veritable men of culture. And in that Old Testament Bible which was the grand source of their culture, naturally the strain of literature especially adapted to find and nourish them would be that literature of Wisdom in which the common duties of life fall into their place. That would be eminently potent to penetrate beneath questions of ceremony and national issues to those individual and workday affairs which are vital to those whose school and church and town-hall was the village synagogue. So in such a country side as Galilee we could trace especially well the result of the years of quiet education and counsel which the sages inaugurated so long ago; could feel the sentiment and atmosphere of things naturally resulting.

And now, if the Epistle of James was written by our Lord's brother, it is very nearly or quite the earliest New Testament book that we have; at once the first literary stirrings of the new order, and the closest connecting link with the Old Tes-

tament attitude to things. That the transition it makes from old to new should be so gentle and natural as to seem equally the efflux of both, manifesting no cataclysm of change but just a quiet entrance, as it were, on the period of adult growth, like that of a man on his twenty-first birthday, is an element of all the greater interest and significance, however it may be lacking in revolutionary features. It makes so much more realizable to us what the so-called fulness of the time was like, and how ready to inaugurate a new era, among those open-minded men of the great body of the nation who were best prepared for it.

But more than this, and most intensely suggestive. If this writer was our Lord's brother, then we have here a strain of good sense and kindly counsel such as took first shape and tone in that very Nazareth household, that true-hearted artisan's family, from which beamed forth in gentle radiance the light of the world. We can look, as it were, into the laboratory where, during those thirty formative years of our Lord's life, great thoughts and ideals were taking shape, as he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. We have a vibration of the things they talked about, at table and while their hands were busy at work; of the practical views and

definitions of life that emerged from daily discussions, and observations of their common village interests, and readings of the Book which was the Jew's priceless heritage. How homelike and familiar it all becomes! How charming become James's homely images of the grass of the field, and of the fountain sending forth sweet water and bitter, and of the mirror, and of the beasts and birds and serpents, and of the assemblies and market-places, when we think them by the side of His words who spoke of lilies and leaven and mustard-seed and fig-trees, and of goodly pearls and raiment! It is all of one tone and mental habit. Like our laureate poet afterward, James could have said to his elder brother, as regarded all the common influences which the two shared: —

> "But thou and I are one in kind,
> As moulded like in Nature's mint;
> And hill and wood and field did print
> The same sweet forms in either mind. . . .
>
> "At one dear knee we proffer'd vows,
> One lesson from one book we learn'd,
> Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turn'd
> To black and brown on kindred brows." [1]

To be sure, the elder brother so outstripped the younger, as his tremendous venture of faith

[1] Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, lxxix.

in the power of the spirit without measure imposed its large demands upon him, that the younger, along with the mother and other members of the family, could not keep up with him; and once they feared he was beside himself; but later James swung loyally into line, seeing, as he pondered more upon it, how clear was the way and how continuous, from their plain village ideals of wise living to the heights of vision and depths of involvement revealed in the life and work of the elder.

We need not stumble at this slow-moving conviction of James, or wonder that he waited until the resurrection before he gave full committal to his brother's interpretation of life. It does not invalidate the earlier genuineness of the man who in time came to be called James the Just; it simply evidences a more deliberate spiritual growth; and that this was not resented or wondered at on the part of Jesus appears from the fact that the latter took pains after his resurrection to show himself to James, as if this were all James needed to clinch his belief. It must indeed have caused great searching of heart and readjustment of a life's thinking, when James became aware that he was brother and childhood mate of the Messiah. Both the humility and the greatness

that inhered in the consciousness, both the lowly common life and the transcendently removed larger one, would for a while stand in the way. But that he lived himself graciously and honorably into the relation, we have his blameless later life and his martyrdom as head of the church in Jerusalem to show. We have also this epistle; so answering to this character, whether he wrote it or not. The epistle is as truly in the natural line of things as is the man. It is as if he would leave the quickening and redemptive work to the elder brother; to him also the grand initiative and, so to say, definition of terms; while he, the younger brother and loyal disciple, set himself to domesticate and naturalize the larger truths in the idiom of those earlier thirty years. What was our Lord thinking, we have often asked ourselves, during all his pre-ministry time, when from the age of twelve he was moving in the consciousness that in some unique way he must be about his Father's business? There are no direct words of his to show; but if this epistle is his brother's work, we come nearer to it than anywhere else; we may know something of what his brother was thinking then, and of what kind of thoughts the two brothers had in common. We sense the tone of the household in which Jesus was at home.

II

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael asked, with the same twinge of incredulity that we feel when we think of a hill-town hamlet or a little red schoolhouse. "Come and see," was the reply. Nathanael was fair-minded enough to go and see; and seeing Jesus, he was immediately convinced. The good thing that had come out of Nazareth, out of the heart of the common people, was a wisdom that the common people heard gladly, because to their soundly tempered mind it carried its own authority. Yet also it proved to be a wisdom for all the world. Neither common nor exalted could monopolize it; it was no respecter of persons. Later, when that same wisdom was perpetuating its vitality in little companies of believers here and there, another son of Nazareth, James, was called to care for the church at Jerusalem, that inoffensive band, not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, who were still open-hearted enough to be nourished by what the common people had heard gladly. How he first got there and when, what gave him his dominating influence even beyond the called and appointed apostles, we do not know. Perhaps it was

his relationship to Jesus; but at any rate, the honorable title he came to bear would indicate an intrinsic reason for his being a trusted repository of sane counsel and helpfulness. He was called James the Just, as also his father Joseph had before him been called the just; a man who not only kept the law but loved it, making the good old customs reasonable and liberal. And through long years James cared for the church, shaping its attitude and its policy, and patiently translating its old traditions and its new truths into terms of the Sermon on the Mount. He had not been of the band of those disciples who accompanied Jesus through the cities of Galilee and Judea and noted with wonder the growth of his Messianic ideas. His doctrine footed back rather to the thirty years period, to a more youthful companionship, during which ideas inherited from a long Hebrew past were taking on new form and power and beauty in two brothers' minds at once. What these ideas came to later, as illumined by crucifixion and resurrection, he accepted loyally, as soon as he saw their deep meaning for life. But it would seem that the centre of their appeal to him was in their time-honored roots and principles, their soundness as an educative body of history and pro-

phecy and precept. With the distinctive details of Jesus' ministry he seemed to have less to do than with the general tissue of truth which the ministry had translated into new power. The Epistle of James, vital as it is with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, sounds not so much like the echo of that as like the reverberation of something earlier, something which long before had been domesticated as household words. The only allusion the epistle makes to the elder brother's history is in a very unvindictive mention of his tragic death, with its redeeming feature identified with Christ's magnanimous attitude of gracious allowance. "Ye have condemned and killed the just," it says, "and he doth not resist you."[1]

To such grounding it was, to such wise guidance, gracious and strong, that the mother church in Jerusalem was entrusted.

It was by no means the last time that men have come from the hills and country villages to infuse new blood into the veins of the metropolis, and keep it sweet and simple in heart. Business, too, is often enlarged and energized by country boys, like Marshall Field in Chicago; and statesmanship and learning and philosophy have drawn

[1] James v, 6.

their strongest qualities from the country. Three centuries ago, a Warwickshire youth went up to London, and among the wits and elegant triflers of the metropolis sounded the human heart in literature to such result that Shakespeare is to this day the greatest name in English letters. James, here in Jerusalem, wrote as well as spoke and presided at councils and administered. If, as is assumed, this epistle was his work, we have from his hands a genuine Wisdom book, pulsating with the idiom of the hills and of homely nature. It was still for the common people whose hearts remained simple and single; it still evidences what is true in all ages, that the genuine sinew of the world is the common people.

The Epistle of James is a kind of circular letter, addressed "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad," the tribes which our Lord said the disciples were some day to judge, and which are here treated just as if in becoming Christians they had abjured no whit of their older heritage nor ceased to be Jews. As I have said, the epistle assumes no airs of the sage; and the wisdom of which it so frequently speaks is not the wisdom fed out to men from a desk but derived consciously from God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. Thus the book's

tone, in a sweet advance on that older wisdom whose beginning was the fear of God, is first filial, then fraternal. It is conceived in brotherly comrade vein; begins nearly every paragraph with "my brethren;" as if the brother of Christ had taken on himself the gracious office and ministry of being brother to all men. The literary spice of the book is not sought by imitation of the old mashal couplet, or by any effort of artistry; there is, however, a palpable felicity of meaty phrasing, by virtue of which an unusual proportion of James's words stick to the memory; and the figures, like those of our Lord's discourses and parables, and drawn from the same homely and as it were open-air range of analogies, are very telling and illuminative.

So this Epistle of James is a little manual of good sense for the twelve tribes scattered abroad; for men whose lot it is to be humble, to function as it were on the under side of dignities and noble distinctions, and yet who have it consciously in them to be the salt of the earth. There is no unitary term that so well names the ideal that James has in mind for them as the word character, the character, so to say, of the Christian gentleman; an ideal not unlike that which Ecclesiastes has already designed, only, instead of moving with

him in the austere atmosphere of hard work and a crooked world, it moves in the cheery atmosphere of light and faith and universal good-will. In the sense of this ideal he confers on them a patent of real nobility, with which the artificial distinctions of men cannot interfere; it is their business, as men begotten of God's will with the word of truth, to be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. The enlarging nobility of a new-created world thus depends on them, as they set the pace, erecting the standard of gracious living, which to latest time men may emulate and copy. In this consciousness artificial ranks and aristocracies disappear. A new stratum of being is created whereon man as man is reduced to the generous level, or rather raised to the honorable tableland where all life is one: the brother of low degree rejoicing that he is exalted, the rich likewise rejoicing that he is made low; the one lifted consciously to a height where life consists not in the abundance of possessions, the other brought down from the selfish icy isolation where his soul shivers alone in its tottering eminence, to the broad field of common manhood where he is at one with all the happy creation of God.

Thus the book takes its stand on a universal basis of manhood which brings it at once into

direct relation with that primal impulse of wisdom which, as we saw in the beginning of our inquiry, made it practically synonymous with getting rich, with securing the recognized values of this world, in whatever terms — honors, long life, prosperity — these expressed themselves. In its Christian light the real riches, the real values of life, appear in their true principle and color. Just as in Jesus' teaching, so here in James's, the sternest note of warning and denunciation is directed against the rich; not, however, because of their riches, but because of the unbrotherly attitude which riches so naturally engender; because of the heartless fraud which keeps back the just hire of the laborer, and which has reduced life to commercialism and wanton pleasure-seeking. And his most genial and comforting note vibrates to honor the poor of this world rich in faith; not, however, merely because they are poor, but because, with their accession to the true riches, there is left on earth no ground for the external distinctions of class, or for respect of persons.

All this is surely a mintage from the athletic strain of Wisdom which Job's attack by centre brought so trenchantly to the heart of man; an echo of him who dared not respect the person even of God, in such wise as to forsake one whit

of the Godlike, and who to his false friends could say, —

> "Will ye respect His person?
> Or will ye be special pleaders for God? . . .
> He will surely convict you utterly,
> If in secret ye are respecters of persons." [1]

No more can a Christian, with the divine light in his soul, be a special pleader for men. But this mintage from the Job spirit was made, one feels sure, in those early Nazareth days, when James and his elder brother used to talk over the principles of life that later found like expression in the Sermon on the Mount and the parables. Neither brother had any room in his soul for respect of persons. Neither could make wealth, nor adventitious distinction, nor anything but brotherly love and helpfulness, his standard of honor; and to both alike the first beatitude would be, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Such an ideal of character has its stable elements of principle, which none can miss or mistake. You know where to find it. You can lean upon it. For one thing, it is just and steady; its faith is not an emotion or a speculation but an integrity; it holds to its aspiration of wisdom without wavering or double-mindedness. This

[1] Job xiii, 8–10.

last word, the word double-minded, is thought to be a coinage of St. James's; and ever since he introduced it, it has figured to great purpose in the Christian vocabulary. "A double-minded man," he says, "is unstable in all his ways;" [1] has no stamina, is not as we say placed, but tosses about like a wind-driven wave of the sea. "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners," he says again, "and purify your hearts, ye double-minded." [2] Along with this steadiness and singleness of mind goes also the word which mirrors the mind to the world. As a poet puts it, "man's word is God in man." It is surely another echo from the Nazareth days when James says, "Above all things, swear not, . . . but let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay;" [3] let your character be so of one tissue and truth that your word is better than your oath; this same thing we have heard in the precepts of the elder brother. "If any man offend not in word," James says further, "the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." [4] And the exquisite passage about the power of the tongue, which follows this remark, is of a piece with this ideal of steadiness and singleness; it cannot bear that blessing and cursing should

[1] James i, 8.
[2] James iv, 8.
[3] James v, 12. Cf. Matthew v, 33–37.
[4] James iii, 2.

proceed out of the same mouth, like waters sweet and bitter out of the same fountain. The man of faith should move and speak and live all together, all as it were one homogeneous fabric, from any part of which men may deduce the rest, and be aware of the solid centre of the man.

For another thing, such ideal of character has, like the old Wisdom, its own standard and aim of self-culture. The very first precept of the book introduces us to this, and at the outset directs the soul's achievement to the highest and hardest things. St. James, as truly as the sages before him, is concerned with self-culture, a counsel of perfection; with this new coloring and motive, that it is rigorous training in the interests of a life which is acting on others, and which is to be a kind of model for a new-created world. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth," is the source and purpose recognized, "that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."[1] A pretty high trust and responsibility this, is it not? for a lowly sect of Hebrew laymen and wage-earners to assume. And so, in pursuance of this trust, the book strikes at once for that masterful mood which will make the hardest and most perilous experiences in life cultural. "My

[1] James i, 18.

brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."[2] This is thoroughly coördinate with that fibre of justness, steadiness, single-mindedness, which we have already noted. Patience — this basal virtue of St. James's, the inculcation of which in some phase is one of the most pervasive notes of his book, resolves itself for me into no term so fitting as our breezy word staying-power. It refers itself to that God who, in His constancy of good gifts to men, works unweariedly in a beneficence wherein is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; the same God, and in the same aspect, whom the Elder Brother bids men emulate, in being perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect. And as the final term of perfection, James directs our staying-power to the hardest things, the things that develop spiritual muscle and tissue, the things that steady and toughen the spiritual sinews. To emphasize this, he draws on the grandest old Wisdom book of all, bidding his readers emulate the patience of Job, from which he deduces "the end of the Lord." Get the doing of the hardest

[1] James i, 2, 3.

things, the sturdy conquering of the most inveterate foes, into your blood and bone, and all the easier things fall into natural relation. It is the same virtue of staying-power with which St. Peter likewise starts his Christian community in the new life;[1] the same that St. Paul weaves into his organic ideal of self-culture. "And not only so," says the latter, "but we glory in tribulations also," — not accept them under protest or as a necessary evil, but glory in them as an invaluable asset of life, — "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us."[2] And this, with the directed energy it entails, is carried on to the very highest end a man can live for or attain. "To them," says this same Paul, "who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life."[3] Thus, in this virtue of staying-power, the strong and sinewy virtue of the new Wisdom, James and all the other pioneer inculcators of the Christian character are at one.

This manual of Christian self-culture turns out

[1] Cf. 1 Peter ii. 19, 20.
[2] Romans v, 3–5.
[3] Romans ii, 7.

to be very comprehensive; more so than we can trace in detail. There is, for instance, given in a philosophic tone much like that of the Wisdom of Solomon, a penetrative analysis of the lusts that war in our members; which are acknowledged as man's alone, and no compulsion of God's or nature's, and which then are followed along the analogy of nature to their malign offspring of the second and third generation, sin and death. It is the same quasi-scientific sense of things that we have found pervading the whole body of Wisdom and increasing with its growth: the sense that a man's harvest is according to his sowing, and that he has no right to unload his evil propensities on God. The strong, self-directive individual has come royally to his own, and the spirit of rounded character in him, while willing to accept all the responsibilities of his success or failure, is using a power not his own, and in the assured truth of that power is eager to be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The new overflow of life has not diminished the appetency for self-culture. Rather, it has made it deeper and keener; has made the soul desirous to gain the nobler thing that it may have the nobler thing to impart; and has made the very experience which in a passive, law-ridden life, the sense of which caused

Ecclesiastes such gloom, was its source of weakness — namely, the onset of evil and crushing environment — now its source of strength. The change in fundamental direction has made the difference. It is not until the current of life has turned from passive to active, from selfward to outward flowing, that like James we can breathe blessings on our temptations, and like Paul can "glory in tribulations also," those austere friends in disguise which, through an ascending scale of seasoning discipline, conduct the character to the height where the love of God is shed abroad in the heart.

"Ye are the salt of the earth," was our Lord's homely figure to describe the function in society of those who were learning life-lessons of him. It is your business to keep the corporate life sweet and wholesome and savorsome. James, brought up in the same Nazarene household, accepts the trust, and translates it into detailed duty and opportunity; by this means conferring on his diocese of lowly brethren the truest patent of nobility. And so the man of his counsel, who for scholarship or wealth or distinction would seem to be only the man on the under side of things, becomes the real power and vital saving influence of the upper; he is the power behind the throne, the

nerve and sinew of a worthier body politic. This, when we come to think of it, is the noblest service that the Wisdom, instituted by sages and counsellors so long ago, can render to humanity. It is the domestication and every-day working of the Wisdom of God.

III

Wisdom has found its permanent home in the common heart; in the sweetening of neighborly relations and duties, in the acceptance of an ideal of patience and justice and good-will. It is all so common-sense and obvious that we take it, without any thrill of brilliancy or novelty, as a matter of course. But let us glance a little now, by way of summing up, at the road we have traversed and the goal we have reached. What has become of the Hebrew Wisdom as a developed strain of life and literature, as a philosophy of life by the side of other philosophies; as a candidate for the reward, the prosperity, the wage, which from the beginning has bulked so large in the sages' ideal? Has it from crude and folk's beginnings altered into "something rich and strange," as it were revolutionary; or has its growth been merely from germ to completed organism, with the promise of its beginning clarified and fulfilled?

In the opening chapter of our book we spoke of the various strains of national genius; distinguishing the Hebrews, with their genius for religion, by the side of the Greeks, with their genius for art and philosophy, and the Romans, with their genius for organization and government. The Wisdom strand of the Hebrew literature, as we noted then, would seem at first thought to have been a little aside from its main trend; like the efforts of a man to express himself in an essentially foreign idiom, as Browning represents Dante trying for once to paint an angel, and Raphael essaying to make a century of sonnets. The natural channel of the Hebrews' religious genius would seem to have been mystic revelation: the divinely given law of being mediated by Moses and the priests, and the "Thus saith the Lord" mediated and proclaimed by prophets. Wisdom, the third strand of their literature, professing for once to be nothing more than the native insight of man, interrogating the ongoings of nature, especially of human nature, in its every-day relations with the world of labor and management and secular activities, represented, so to say, the Hebrew's well-meant endeavor to speak in a character not of native genius but of studied talent, and be, so far as he could compass

it, like a Greek or a Roman. And what it came to in practical living and precept we have seen. To the end his Wisdom, keen and worldly as it was, that Wisdom which began instinctively with the fear of the Lord, was shot through and through with religion. The national genius could not but express itself idiomatically; its natural color must be imparted to his secular affairs and ideals. To get now at the real inwardness of this fact, we can do no better, I think, than to go back to the founder of the nation, that remarkably well individualized patriarch whose first name, Jacob, itself prophetic, was changed later for the name Israel, which recognized in his nature a higher and supplementing strain. The whole developing spirit of Wisdom is in a significant sense embodied in this man.

Jacob, "the supplanter," as his name indicates, the child who on coming into the world took hold on his elder brother's heel; who as a youth at home was shrewdly on hand to bargain for his brother's birthright and defraud him of his blessing; who as soon as he left home and came in contact with others began to enrich himself at the expense of his father-in-law, Laban, — this Jacob, with his scheming, unscrupulous ways, seems at first thought like scarcely other than

acquisitiveness incarnate. The good things of this world seem by native attraction to come his way. If he were to infuse a genius into a nation's character, we should expect it to be first of all the commercial genius, the genius for getting rich. And that, moreover, is the first impression we get from the Hebrew as we see him to-day. It is not his religious genius that is to-day in evidence, but the keen-eyed genius for profit which, while we Gentiles are heedless, is quietly, as the phrase is, getting there. What more than all else impresses and disquiets us in the present-day Jew, is his persistent, inveterate genius for material success.

But as we look more penetratively into the character of Jacob, we become aware of deeper and as it were regulative and corrective traits. For one thing, he always had regard not merely to the end, as if that were to be attained at all hazards, but to the means he would take; and these were devised as a self-justifying law of procedure, so that no rule or statute could come back on him to punish. This is still characteristic of his descendant; it is his ingrained regard for law making itself felt. His object shall come as it were in the order of nature. For another and the determining thing, Jacob had a capacity for the things of the spirit, an appetency, so to say,

for God. He could not become so immersed in wealth-getting and worldly scheming but that, when he met the angel bearing the unseen blessing, he would wrestle all night to secure that blessing, determined to prevail. Whatever he came to see as highest and holiest, that with his other acquisitions he must also have; and that highest, when the stress and test came, must have the casting-vote. In his strong allegiance to the ideal, the capacity to make himself at home in a realm higher than acquisitiveness, Jacob earned the name Israel, "the prince of God." Yet this new name did not register a nature essentially changed, but only the development of his inner being, as it were the coming of his most genuine self to light and power.

This character of Jacob-Israel, whatever it means for the Jew of to-day, is a parable, or rather a veritable type of the course and deepening progress of that Wisdom whose culmination we have now reached. At every step, so to say, down into the Jacob stratum, where was the calculating, tenacious, single-eyed appetency for success, there reached the genial yet disturbing influence of a better ideal and impulse, making the soul ashamed to be unscrupulous, keeping it solicitous about its aims and motives; and this influence

continued in increasing clarity and prevalence until the Israel stratum of character crowned the work, and the Wisdom of acquisitiveness, with its appetency of success still as strong as ever upon it, became the Wisdom of impartation.

This, in large, massive outline, is the meaning of the development we have traced. James, with his homely vein of common sense, is yet clear-sighted to note its culminating point and end. The Wisdom which far back in the centuries men began to explore and to mould item by item into mashals of counsel, began without display and without assumption, as a wisdom from beneath, reaching up in reverence toward the source of power and truth; reaching outward toward the world of men and men's affairs, by the tentacles of observation, experience, meditation. It learned to use all the prudences and subtleties of mind, the skill, the cleverness, the tact, the foresight, the sagacity of word and silence, whereby man works his will on fellow-man, or gets his due from him. It was, on a somewhat larger scale, strangely like that keen shrewdness of Jacob as year after year he toiled in the fields with the flocks of Laban. And at the outset its ideal, confined to this visible world, was scarcely more than the ideal of getting rich, of achieving worldly success, in

whatever terms this was expressed; and in the means it turned toward this end it hardly distinguished between higher and lower, sacred and secular. It had to come into its higher ideals step by step, and by the reacting power of deeper experience. And so ever as it reached outward and upward there came answers according to its insight and committal, and ever it was mysteriously guided to build better than it knew.

Nor was its course at any period an unimpeded rapture of discovery and acquisition. There came wrestlings with the angel in the night; there came impulses to earn a nobler and worthier name; and as if some unseen Power had reached down to overrule it, it was time after time delivered from its aberrations and its too sordid or petty motives. Agur and Satan and Job and Ecclesiastes, with their clearer seeing eyes and their central and flank attacks of reaction, must all have their share in the shaping of its purer ideal.

Then came duly, in its fulness, the reversing outward current of spirit, the overflow of life so poignantly missed, so veritably real; came as the majestic incarnation of the Wisdom of God. And when it came, the Wisdom which hitherto had wrought as if it were all from beneath woke to find that it was all from above, that every good

and perfect gift it had earned had come from Him whose nature it is to have grace and impart Himself, whose loving work in the world is just to give to all men liberally and upbraid not. That was the meaning of His sunshine and His rain; that was the spirit which was to be infused into His highest learners and servants, that they might be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures. So the tact and subtlety and cleverness which Wisdom had so freely employed were transformed into the gracious tact and subtlety and cleverness of unselfish fraternalism; living, but also letting live, and helping to live; making goodness an art. Wisdom, then, is ready for its supreme definition; which here comes as a matter of course. "The wisdom that is from above," says James, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace, of them that make peace."[1] It has learned, as the result of its long education, the supreme courage of faith in human nature; has dared to commit itself to the wisdom of being like God, as in purity of heart it has come to see God.

Have we not here a noble chapter of manhood

[1] James iii, 17, 18.

evolution? The fact that it has made its home and headquarters in the hearts of common men, the oppressed and dispersed of the earth, is all the more to its glory; if these can have the power to sweeten and inherit the earth, by just embodying the elemental brotherhood of mankind, surely the brothers of high degree, as soon as they swing into the common orbit of good-will, will not profit less by it. The first-fruits of God's creatures, in their unwearied vitality and staying-power, shall increasingly look on the results of their faith, in the splendor of harvests.

How now does the developed philosophy of life, that unobtrusive and unconventional solution of things to which from the beginning this common sense in an uncommon degree has been essentially directed, look, as compared with the top-heavy philosophies that through the ages scholars have been devising out of their books and their speculations? A tremendous ferment of research and inquiry has been constantly going on; no age or nation without it; as Ecclesiastes figures it, almost like a disease, an obsession, of restless humanity.

Well, let us apply it to the three great ideas that in effect fill the field of philosophy, and that men have always been working eagerly to get

into systematic order and prove true or false; the ideas of God, immortality, freedom. That poor melancholy old biologist of our time, Professor Haeckel, in his endeavor to guess the riddle of the universe on one monistic principle, and virtually reduce all life to the dimensions of the germ, roundly denies all three, as childish and discarded superstitions, and is trying austerely to reconstruct a world widowed of every vestige of a spiritual ideal.

In our present inquiry we have seen how Job has brought the idea of God into court, and compelled it to show its credentials, and given it the conditions on which it shall survive: that it shall comprise love and care for every creature and a truth in which friendship and brotherhood may thrive; have seen also how, in process of time, men came to associate with that idea the name Father, and commit themselves to the involvements of its natural correlate, the name of sons, and the common interests of a manhood family. If this is not an abysmal philosophy of Deity, it is certainly a vital working-idea, a practical means of making the Godlike real by making it operative. We have noted likewise how the idea of immortality came into court, and how Ecclesiastes insisted on laying its basis in the ennobled

character of the intrinsic man; delaying men's speculations on the unseen future until they had evolved a man fit for the glories of it; and how, in the fulness of the time, immortality too melted into the radiance of a present accomplished fact, which in all its essential principles could be utilized here and now. Both these ideas, God and immortality, have been transferred from the sphere of erudite speculation to the sphere of realized life; are things not to know or to prove, as if they were remote and external to us, but things to be, and to shape life in. And all this has come about in the simplest growth of experience and concept, as it were an equable process of manhood nature.

There remains the third great idea, the idea of freedom. What has become of that, in our growing structure of Wisdom? Haeckel, you know, is especially savage in his denial of this. He is moving in a realm of iron grinding law, wherein our species and environment and heredity imprison us in a lot where, however high our intellect may rise, we are after all only automata, which can run only a little while and then cease altogether. With James, on the other hand, that freedom, that tremendous emancipation of the spirit after which it is so in man to strive, has

become a luminous, sensible, universal fact. He need not, indeed, say much about it, any more than we need to take painful note of breathing or the process of digestion; but what he says takes the whole truth for granted, as a matter of course. It appears most strikingly, perhaps, in the paradoxical name that he gives to the law by which we are environed, and which is still, as law ever must be, in full current of control and obligation. He calls it "the law of liberty." That is what it is to him who, as James the Just, not only obeys law but loves it. "So speak ye, and so do," he says, "as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty;"[1] that is, not by some alien code imposed by a will or fate from without, and which you must obey or be punished, but by the principle of doing just as you like. That, he says, is what you are to be judged by, doing as you like; therefore live up to that. Consider how far this audacious counsel has brought us in the consciousness of freedom. Think how it would seem to the priest, who has had the law in charge, and to the prophet, who has spent his time denouncing infractions of it. You have the principle of life within you, the brotherly impulse of good-will which works no ill, but rather positive and active good, to neigh-

[1] James ii, 12.

bor; now be free, now do just what you like. This higher lawlessness has been very slow hitherto to establish itself in the Christian consciousness; has been very imperfectly able to disentangle itself from the austerities of a childhood stage of being, the nonage and schoolmastery of the Old Testament. Men could not trust themselves, could not let themselves go, could not cast themselves as these two brothers Jesus and James did, in utter faith, on the healthful current of life. But this, just this, is manhood freedom. To do as you will, because the will in which your whole being centres is divine, this is the life of the spirit, self-directive and free; this is the wisdom of freedom, taking its healthful insights and impulses for granted, and advancing not in rebellion against the laws and standards of its dictating world, but in hearty fellowship with what is good in them. It is freedom consenting to the law that it is holy and just and good, and in the line of that inner consent going on as confidently as if it had no restraint at all.

Of course James, the mechanic's son of Nazareth, does not philosophize this all out. He does not need to do so, for he has entered the life which is itself a wisdom, a philosophy. This definition of our life's standard as the law of liberty is

no accident or innovation. A long history of expanding insight and culture lies behind and beneath it. Nor is James the uncultured man we would make him out; his epistle, with its citations of scripture truths and personages, shows that he has the whole spirit of Hebrew Wisdom in solution. But he does better than philosophize; he acts upon it. To look into the perfect law of liberty, he says, and merely read it or hear it, amounts to nothing; you forget it all, just as you forget how your face looks in a glass. To give merely an intellectual or emotional assent is just what devils can do; they also believe, and tremble. This law of yours is not a thing to look at, not a thing for scribes and rabbis and theorists and doctors to putter with; it is a thing to live. Wisdom is a thing to be, and to know by being it, just as the wisest teacher that ever lived *is* the Wisdom of God. Faith is good for nothing without the works, whereby you bear the weight of your will, your activity, your life, on what you believe. Your faith itself is essentially a whole-souled venture; that is its principle. Now do what you will, put your faith into the currents of the world's life, and invite judgment on that score. This counsel expresses, in common-sense terms, the tremendous emergence of life from

the legal into the spiritual, from the yoke of law cosmic and worldly, into the full swing of the law of liberty, or as St. Paul calls it, the law of the spirit of life. We may tabulate it, so to say, by reducing it to these two elemental things: to will what you do, that is, to enlist your whole personality in the life you live; and secondly, to do what you will, that is, to make your freedom a practical carrying out of your personality into action.

Thus, as we examine the three great ideas in which men's philosophies nucleate, we find that all in turn, God, immortality, freedom, have come into the solution of every-day common sense, by being incorporated into common life. We can say of them not that they are merely proved reasonable and credible, but just that they are actual. While men have been doubting and denying and conjecturing and getting into logical labyrinths, these unassuming Hebrews have approached the great ideas by the way of the spirit and put them into working order. Thus, if they have not sounded the abysmal depths of metaphysics, they have done the more practical thing; they have made their philosophy of life, with all its large involvements, an applied science. I was once at dinner with a prominent master engineer and

employer, who, on being asked how his corps of engineers solved the complex problems of their work, answered, "Well, they do it mostly by plain common sense." "But," it was asked, "don't they depend a great deal on their mathematical computations and formulæ?" "No; they use very little mathematics; some few simple formulæ, of course; but mostly they do it by common sense." We will bear in mind, however, that the common sense he was thinking of was the common sense of an engineer; it was trained, educated, disciplined. So likewise was the common sense that issued in this sturdy working philosophy. It had, as we have seen, a history, a long growth of human personality and human meditation and human utterance behind it; and its road lay not through speculations but through life.

One of the most telling examples of what Wisdom has done, in laying stress on the sterling and self-evidencing strain of character, is seen in the way it approaches that attitude of religion which was so dominant in the Hebrew genius, and from which the nation could not disengage itself. We will remember that James's care of the church in Jerusalem fell in a time when Pentecost, with all its enthusiasms of spiritual awaken-

ing, was a recent and ruling memory of the church. There were spiritual gifts to be tempered and regulated. Speaking with tongues, prophesying, ecstatic mental states, the "features commonly found in all forms of revivalism," were in special evidence; it being the nascent stage of the church, when the primitive traits — the subterranean, forcibly repressed life of the soul — break forth in mighty surges; and all this carried with it the danger of exaggerated pietism, and emotional luxury, and "the depreciation of simple morality."[1] At such a tense and perilous time, when of all epochs of the world it was needful that the spirits of the prophets be subject to the prophets, no better fortune could have befallen the church than to have come under the just, wise, yet saintly governance of this brother of our Lord from Galilee. And the wisdom with which he was imbued stood him in good stead; is, more than aught else, the tempering element. It was not in a mind nor in a nation possessed of such a heritage as his to divorce religion, however ecstatic or devotional, from practical good works. Let us adduce here the strangely self-evident yet vital and searching definition that James

[1] I have used, and partly quoted here, a passage in Weinel's *St. Paul, the Man and his Work*, pp. 251, 252.

makes of religion, the only definition of religion, indeed, that we have in the Bible. "Pure religion," he says, "and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." [1] Why, this seems to have deflected the whole matter away from what we naturally think of in religion, from those liturgies and ceremonies and raptures by which the soul is supported, and which symbolize the concentration of the soul on God; and to have made its goal cleanness of life and regard for those needy ones from whom we can expect no pay. But in so doing, if it induces the man to live his sacredest life by willing what God wills, it may take for granted that God, being love, is less concerned for the personal adulation He gets than for the pulsation of love and Godlikeness He induces; and so it has the root of the matter, after all. Get such religion, and you have its Object within you, a pulsation, a character, a life.

What, finally, has this Wisdom come to be as a candidate for the rewards of life, as looking toward that reasonable wage which rightly correlates with our work? The question of reward

[1] James i, 27.

has emerged all along the way; sometimes it has almost monopolized the field; and the attacks and conflicts of motive have raged round it. What now, as we see Wisdom at its highest and sanest, has become of its reward?

Well, as we look into the matter, we discover a thing no less momentous than this: that it is the distinctive mission of the life and literature of Wisdom, as distinguished from the life and obligation of law, to bring out to clear solution the whole problem of life's compensations. Law cannot do it. Law is concerned with justice and right-ness, with evening things up so that when the balance is struck there will be no arrears of iniquity or transgression to incur penalty. Law is so austere and exacting that when we are through with living we may deem ourselves fortunate if we have kept the functions of life intact and integral. But, as the Wisdom of God has pointed out, this does not connote payment, or any enrichment of being, any more than a healthy body or a good digestion may eventually present itself as a candidate for reward. "Doth he thank that servant," Jesus says of any human master, "because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded

you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." [1] We can feel how our Lord's controlling ideal of exuberance of life, περισσόν, doing more and other than duty, here moulds the expression. We have seen how the same idea struggled up through Wisdom; how, when in Job's time Wisdom was in danger of degenerating into commercialism, a warmth within the breast rose up to record its protest and awaken a wholesome reaction and shame. We have seen, in Ecclesiastes' time, how the lack of that overflow, as he sensed it in the world, seemed to bring things to a mere gyration of being, in which the soul of the world grew dizzy and despairing. And when Ecclesiastes raised that virtual question, What is that thing reward? and sounded all its depths and shoals, he could find, to answer his question, nothing other than life itself, its labors bravely undertaken, its character ennobled by the vitality of eternity in the heart. And his answer was the right and sufficing one, so far as it went, so far as without overflow it could fill existence to the brim. There is nobility, for many minds the highest nobility, in a life that is its own reward, intrinsically beyond being bought or sold by glory or warped

[1] Luke xvii, 9, 10.

by any form of greed. It is Tennyson's ideal of the wages of living; I hardly need quote a thing so truly a household word.

"Glory of warrior, glory of orator, glory of song,
Paid with a voice flying by to be lost on an endless sea —
Glory of Virtue, to fight, to struggle, to right the wrong:
Nay, but she aim'd not at glory, no lover of glory she:
Give her the glory of going on, and still to be.

"The wages of sin is death: if the wages of Virtue be dust,
Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
Give her the wages of going on, and not to die." [1]

This is no alien idea to the older Wisdom. We get the vibration and a degree of the faith of it in the very second proverb of the Solomonic collection, which, though in negative form, involves the whole fibre of the Wisdom literature: —

"Treasures of wickedness profit nothing:
But righteousness delivereth from death." [2]

In this beginning the forecast of the end is begun.

But to have brought life so far, noble and worthy as it is, is not to have made it, as we say nowadays, a paying investment. It has simply raised the law-endowed life to its highest power, and at that height has found it so sound and

[1] Tennyson, *Wages.* [2] Proverbs x, 2.

intrinsic that it would not barter it for anything else, glory or wages, or measure its value in any terms except those of its own permanence. If the reward is the life itself, we are still in the domain of equivalence; wherein is still a note of rendering due and of stoic hardness; and this can produce the complacency of fulfilment, but not the rapture of creating new values. And this latter is what reward essentially is; it is the bringing of a new and higher value to light, a real profit, recognized as more than equivalent to the investment. It is when the Wisdom of God becomes the natural way of living that a super-induced reward, felt as such and never cloying or disappointing, comes as an asset into the capitalization of life.

What, then, is the nature of that reward? In a life that has learned the blessedness of overflow, what can come back, a corresponding compensation, to meet its generous outlay?

It has not been without its vibrations of anticipation and prophecy. Back in the days of the early Solomonic Wisdom, a sage had the insight to say: —

> "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life;
> And he that *winneth souls* is wise." [1]

[1] Proverbs xii, 30.

Here, if we will consider it, begins to reverberate a new note, a new motive of Wisdom: not buying or earning, but winning, and winning not gold, nor anything to appease the pride of possession, but souls. It may still be keen and shrewd and foresighted, yet quickening and fruitful as a ray of kindly sunlight, as it takes its pay in love. Later an apocalyptic prophet makes a similar discovery of the radiant new ideal; but to him the sequel of it still appears extrinsic, as if not that itself but the shine and glory of it were the ultimate thing to live for. "They that be wise," says Daniel, "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."[1] An authentic foregleam, this, of that crowning reversal of the spiritual current wherein the adult man is no longer a living soul but a life-giving spirit. We have already seen it worked out in type, in the Wisdom of God; such was Christ's reward; He lost worldly emoluments, life and all, but "of them which thou gavest me have I lost none."[2] Then later, in the fiery and fervent life of Paul, it becomes the absorbing, overwhelming impulse of his existence; he will stop at no perils or persecutions, no dignities or self-regarding proprieties;

[1] Daniel xii, 3. [2] John viii, 9.

becoming all things to all men, if by any means he may save some. Here is the real achievement of reward; and in the tremendous appetency of it Paul would almost rather stay here laboring and suffering than go to be with Christ.

Is this too high to be the ideal of a common man in Christ, — too ethereal, and so to say professional, to be infused into that life of industry and business, getting and spending, wherein the ordinary personality seems to be lost in the crowd? It does not seem to be shirked, even by this apostle of common sense. Let us hear the final word with which our Lord's brother takes leave of those whom he has rejoiced to call his brothers one and all. "My brethren," he says, "if any among you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know that he which converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."[1] This is where Wisdom, the vitalizing leaven of the kingdom of God, lands us at last; Wisdom employing all its discipline and all its beneficent art, not in mere self-culture but in soul-culture; and this, the responsive life of the neighbor at our side, the rescue of souls from death, the vitalizing of a new creation in love and wisdom,

[1] James v, 20.

— this is its success and reward. And this is the only reward. Any life imprisoned in self, even the noblest, proudest self, becomes unendurable; any life absorbed in the enrichment of the mind, by art or study or invention, is still subject to the weariness of the flesh and to the eventual break-down of the powers; but life identified in love and faith with the salvation and welfare of men is life eternal, which day by day is renewed though the outward man perish, and to which is added a compensation more than wages.

Such a thing has the wisdom which is from above, witnessing with the wisdom which is from beneath, brought into the motive and capacity of the common man. Its beginning, the initial impulse of sanity, was the fear of the Lord. Its end, the coronation of common sense, is the love of man. And the two agree in one; for thereby the unseen Love which created and ever creates is naturalized and domesticated in His own creation, being identified with least and lowliest. And the field of this wisdom is the home field alike of low degree and rich, its values mutual and fruitful, as between brothers.

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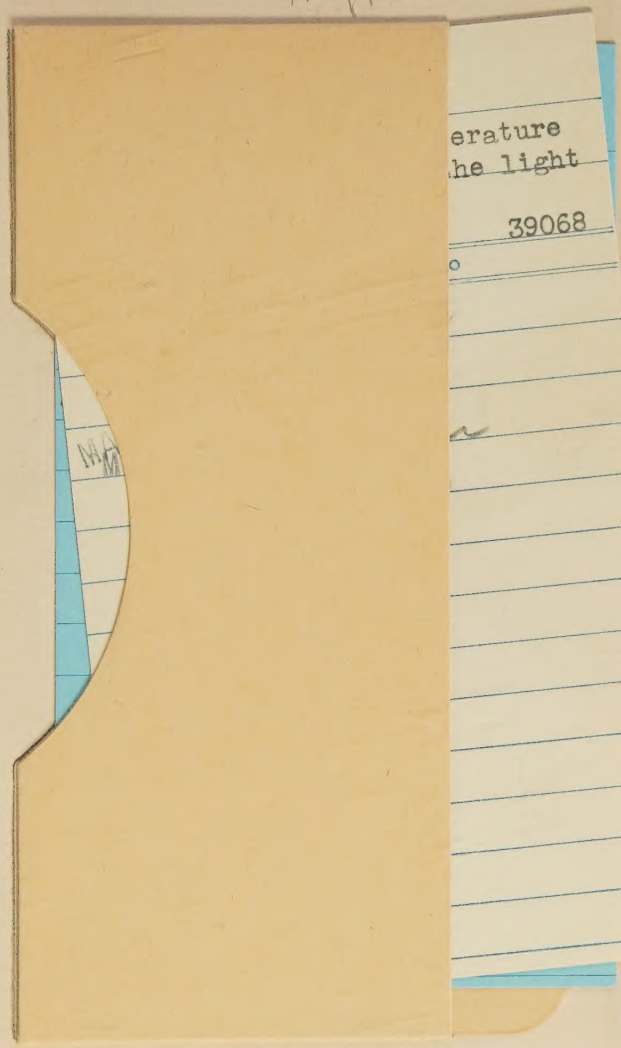
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